THE WORLD'S ROUGH HAND

H. PHILIPS WHITMARSH

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THE
WORLD'S ROUGH HAND

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TOIL AND ADVENTURE
AT THE ANTIPODES

BY
H. PHELPS WHITMARSH

NEW YORK
THE CENTURY CO.
1898

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THE DE VINNE PRESS.

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I

IN THE FORECASTLE

I SUPPOSE at some remote period — too remote certainly for us to put our finger on it — a seafaring life was quite an ideal one, and the lot of a sailorman the jolliest of all. I say I suppose this, because in no other way can I account for the glowing pictures which have been painted of Jack by the nautical novelists and song-makers of this century. If my supposition is a wrong one, then it is evident that a good many persons have yet to learn that the mere fact of their having crossed the Atlantic in a floating hotel, or having taken a trip up the Thames in a penny steamer, does not qualify them to write truthfully about matters pertaining to salt water.

He who would study this problem must know what it means to be driven, in a boarding-house master's cart, to the pierhead, with one or two months' pay already gone,

and his sole assets a few old clothes, a cheap suit of oilskins, a tin pannikin[1] and plate, a sheath-knife, and a "donkey's breakfast."[2] He must know what it means to live for months at a time upon food that a longshore dog would scorn; to drink foul water, and to sleep but three hours and a half at a stretch. He must know what it means to spend a night on the foot-ropes, shortening sail; to round the Horn in a fireless, leaky forecastle, and pass week after week without a dry rag in which to work or sleep. None but those who have experienced it can know the monotonous horror of running the "easting" down in 55° south, with a "carrying-on" skipper; or know aught of two mortal hours lashed to the stanchions of the forecastle-head,—the butt of every cruel sea and every icy blast,—keeping a bright "lookout." None but those who have lived it can know the dreariness of a life in which there is ever the same prison-like discipline, the same days for pork, the same days for beef, and the same beef and pork from port to port.

And so after five years of this life, with two added years on a naval training-ship, I summed it up as a calling which isolated one from home, friends, society, and all kinds of pleasure; which brought with it hardships, privations, danger, poor food, miserable quarters, and, worse than all, inadequate pay. I dis-

[1] Tin cup. [2] Straw mattress.

covered, in other words, that I had chosen the wrong profession. And although I had then given the best years of my life to the sea, no sooner did I make this startling discovery than I swore a big salt oath that in the future I would trundle a wheelbarrow ashore rather than ship again as a seaman. I came to this conclusion and to the end of my pay-day about the same time. I was then in London, where, several weeks before, I had been paid off.

During my sea life I had "rounded the Horn" thrice; had hailed "dinghy-wallas" in Calcutta; had lain for weeks within sight of Table Mountain; had seen the Chinese quarter in San Francisco; had dropped anchor in nearly every nitrate port between Callao and Valparaiso; was familiar with all the great ports of Australia; had taken my second mate's "ticket," and had been licked from a romantic school-boy into something the shape of a man. I knew, or thought I knew, everything about a ship. Of the world ashore, however, its ways, its people, and its business, I was woefully ignorant. The question, therefore, that arose in my mind was, What should I do?

There were two things open to me, two things at which, when I was younger, I had contemptuously sniffed. Now, at the mature age of twenty-one, after the bed of my own making had not proved an easy one, I con-

sidered these again. I had an uncle, a physician, who had expressed his willingness to put me through the hospitals and make me his assistant. This was one of my chances. I had no objection to the profession, but as I cordially detested my uncle, I soon gave up that idea. The other opportunity was offered me by a wealthy maiden aunt, who was set upon getting me into the church. She was not only prepared to pay my college expenses, but also willing, after I had been ordained, to give me a "living." In this case, unfortunately, things were reversed. I could put up with my aunt, but I would not be a parson.

I struggled conscientiously for one whole morning to compose a letter to one or the other of my affectionate relatives. It was, however, useless. I could neither reconcile myself to being tied down, nor stomach the thought of being dependent. After thinking over the matter very seriously for several hours, I made up my mind that as long as I had to start fresh in life, it would be less galling to my pride, and greatly to my advantage, to do so away from home. I had once heard some one say that young men without means should go to a new country and grow up with it. It was that sentiment, I think, that decided me. I would go to Australia.

This partial settlement of the problem freed my mind of much anxiety, for not only did it

give me something definite to prepare for, but it put off for a time the necessity of choosing an occupation. Without more ado I began to look for a ship. Among those about to sail for Australia, I found the old clipper-ship *Bosphorus*, and, as I knew her to be a favorite passenger-vessel, and likely, therefore, to be what sailors call an "easy packet," I made my way aboard, and engaged, at the nominal wages of one shilling per month, to work my passage out to Adelaide.

A week later, having signed the ship's articles as "A. B.," I chartered a cab, and was driven to the dock from which, that very day, the *Bosphorus* was to sail.

When I reached the pierhead, it was nearly high water; the dock gates stood wide open; and the *Bosphorus*, with a gang of riggers aboard, was hauling briskly through the still water of the basin toward the river. Upon her forecastle-head, a bunch of men, bending almost double over the bow line, surged rhythmically back and forth to the quaint, nautical "singing out" of the leader; and the rope plashed in the water ahead of them after each pull.

The hauling-song began something like this: "Way-ho!" (jerk), "Way-ho-hu!" (jerk), "O-le-obo-ho!" (jerk), increasing in sound, volume, and power as it progressed; then running into a wordless chant,—a vowel song,—which, with a pulling emphasis, and a

melody as weird as a Gaelic psalm-tune, rose and fell like the song of the shrouds when the wind pipes strong.

"Slack away, aft! Slack away!" roared the dock-master, as the stern line jammed at the bits and twanged like a harpstring. "Haul away for'ard again, boys! Stand by, for this line here! Lookout, make fast aft! All fast? Haul in, man, haul in! Steady on your stern line! steady! Vast hauling for-'ard! Hold on your stern line! Belay! Fenders here!" And a moment later the big, painted "porter" flattened the bag of cork that hung betwixt her and the wall, and sidled up to the pierhead, ready to receive her passengers and crew.

Climbing over the rail, I made for the forecastle, and, by throwing my bag into it, secured an upper berth. It was my first experience before the mast. Hitherto I had sailed as apprentice, and on my last voyage as third mate. After I had changed my shore clothes for something more suitable, I stepped up on the forecastle-head, and "turned to."

For half an hour or so the ship and wharf presented a lively, bustling scene. Passengers with their friends, drunken sailors, boarding-house masters, "tarts" from the East End, babies and nurses, dock laborers, stevedores, cabmen, policemen, loafers, all contributed to the general confusion. They talked fast, ran about excitedly, kissed a good deal, and cried

copiously. At the last moment the fresh provisions came alongside. The cries of impatient drivers, the stamping of horses, and the rattling of hoisting-blocks sounded all along the dock; and a fat policeman swore saltly in his attempts to keep a clear course for the wagons. Down in the muddy-green water of the dock the masts and hulls of the great vessels were sharply mirrored, now contorted by the ripples from a passing boat, now lost as a cat's-paw wafted in from the river.

Outside, a big Mediterranean boat, flying light, was churning a lather under her black counter, while a little tug bunted her nose round toward the sea.

Then the bell sounded, and there was a scramble for shore. The gangway was withdrawn, the lines cast off, the order given to "Heave away on your capstan!" and we hauled slowly through the gates to the tune of the favorite outward-bound chantey:

Sometimes we 're bound to London town,
Sometimes we 're bound to France,

CHORUS: Heave away, my bullies, heave away.

But now we 're bound to Adelaide,
To give those girls a chance!

CHORUS: Heave away, my bully boys;
We 're all bound to go.

With two rousing cheers,— one from the shore and one from the ship,— the *Bosphorus*

swung out into the muddy river, and, attended by two puffing tugboats, cautiously picked her way down-stream. All along the port rail were the red-eyed faces and fluttering handkerchiefs of the passengers, who were waving their last good-bys. Few of them would see their native land or friends again.

For my own part, even had I wished, I was too busy to indulge in sentiment. As a matter of fact, however, I felt no sorrow at leaving home; and that, partly because I was accustomed to it, and partly because I knew that I could return when I chose. This is one thing, at least, in which the sailor has an advantage over the rest of mankind. Whatever the state of his purse, he can always travel. If he wishes to try his luck in Australia, Africa, America, or any other part of the civilized world, he can always secure a passage in return for his services. And when he is tired of the new country,—for Jack is very fickle,—or feels a longing to see Paradise Street once more, he is sure of a vessel to carry him there, and a pay-day into the bargain. It is this very feeling, I think, that keeps men at sea. I never knew a sailor who did not declare that each voyage was his last one.

When they get ashore, however, and, with their one only trade, find it hard to get work, they naturally take the line of least resistance, and drift out to sea again.

On reaching the mouth of the river, we

found a smart little breeze blowing out of the northeast. Orders were at once given to loose all sail; and, having cast off the tugs, we proceeded on our voyage in earnest.

The second night out I saw the last of "old England." It was in the middle watch, and I was on the lookout. The sea was calm,—strangely calm for the Channel,—a slight fog was rolling in from the southward, and over the great vessel and her three hundred souls there had fallen a great quiet. Aloft, the black bellies of the topsails softly hummed, and the upper wings rustled like the wings of many birds. Alow, the phosphorescent channels gurgled, the mimic waves slapped spitefully against the weather bow, and the lofty fabric, heeling slightly to the sleepy wind, went swaying and curtseying into the mysterious night.

A few minutes before I was relieved, I saw, and reported, Dungeness Light. When I came on deck again, all land was out of sight.

Of our life on board the *Bosphorus* — its friendships, its quarrels, its monotony, its petty jealousies, its gossip — I have nothing to record. Barring the birth of twins in the steerage, the trip was uneventful. The ship was well manned and victualed, we carried fine weather with us from Sheerness to the Semaphore, and the passage, from the sailor's point of view, was a remarkably comfortable one.

On the 28th day out we crossed the "line" and entered the doldrums, where, after ten days of calms, light airs, fierce heat, and terrific thunder-storms, we at last caught the south-east "trades." For a spell the course was "full and by."

Except for a "sweat-up" each morning and evening, we started neither brace nor halyard. We "shellbacks" snoozed at night in our watch on deck, the captain was in the best of humors, and the ship forged steadily on into the great South Sea.

In the forecastle there were several "shilling-a-month men," namely, men who, like me, were working their way out to the "colonies." Some were going with the idea of trying their luck ashore; others were bent upon working in the Australian coasting-trade. Among the shore-going contingent was one man with whom I made friends.

His name was Sam Watson. Though he had begun life as a sailor, Sam had long been a miner. He had been to every "rush" in Australia for twenty years, had made and lost two or three fortunes, was an experienced mineralogist and bushman, and was an excellent type of the men one meets in new countries, particularly on mining-fields. A scarred, weather-beaten, powerfully built fellow, with an immense amount of will-power and savage pluck, he was indeed a man who seemed to me to have been specially built for his vocation.

Sam's stories of "up-country" life, his experiences in mining-camps, his encounters with blacks and bush-rangers, fascinated me beyond measure. Night after night we walked the deck, talking of the great island continent, of which, as yet, I had seen only the edges. It was Sam's friendship that shaped my course in Australia.

Long before we reached port, it was arranged that we should travel together, and that upon landing we should first try our luck on the new silver-fields of the Barrier Range. Thus the question of what I should do in the new country was settled, and settled very much to my satisfaction, for, having accepted Sam as my guide and preceptor, I shook off all responsibility, and, with the certainty of youthful inexperience, viewed the future with calm security. How we should reach Silverton, which was several hundred miles inland, and how we were to become mine-owners and make fortunes, were questions I did not trouble myself about. Sam had done it before, and could of course do it again. That was sufficient for me. And I argued that, if Sam had made several "piles," I surely ought to be able to make one; and with that one I felt I should be satisfied. These were my thoughts and plans on the passage out.

After running the easting down in high latitudes for the sake of fine weather, and passing Cape Leeuwin without a "blow,"

on the evening of the ninety-eighth day we sighted Kangaroo Island. And what a flutter and buzz there was round the decks that night! What a straining of eyes toward the first land, the land of promise, the new country! Black and mysterious, it lay like a big rain-cloud on the starboard bow. The excitement showed itself in quickened steps, easily provoked laughter, numberless questions, and from abaft came the sound of popping corks.

Those of us who had been to Adelaide before suddenly found ourselves important. We were listened to, and our sayings retailed through the cabins. Trunks were already being packed, friendships were cooling off, and clothes with three-months-old creases were being put on. And a restless feeling pervaded us all; for with the breeze that swept down the gulf there came a new smell into our nostrils — the smell of land. It was an harmonious blend of grass and flowers and trees and mother earth — a perfume that waked a host of sleeping memories. But in the composition of the old scent, which we recognized, there was a subtle, underlying odor, which suggested more, played more tricks with the imagination, than the whole. This, to most of those aboard, was new, and, more than that, it was foreign. It was the smell of Australia.

Next morning, at daybreak, an eager, excited crowd hung over the bulwarks, waiting

to catch the first glimpse of the mainland. And when the sun rose at the end of our bowsprit, and unrolled the panorama of Glenelg Bay, there went up from the land-hungry hundreds a great shout of joy. Ah! but you who travel in express-trains and ocean racers cannot know this land-hunger, this aching for the sight of ever so small a piece of *terra firma*. You who are seeking for new sensations, new pleasures, go for a three months' voyage in a "wind-jammer," and you will not be disappointed.

Although neither bold nor imposing, the approach to Port Adelaide is, nevertheless, beautiful. And to us, who had looked upon nothing but sea and sky for ninety-eight days, it seemed like a glimpse of heaven. The yellow strip of beach, the bright green of the mangroves, the tropical-looking buildings of the Semaphore, the broad, fertile valley, the distant, white-spired city, and, behind all, the bluest of hills,—these were the things we reveled in that morning. The essence of the charm, however, was its newness. Everything was different. The school of fish that ruffled the water ahead of us was a strange species, the scream of the gulls circling in our wake had a new note, the men in the tug that came out for us spoke with an odd twang; the gaudy buoys, the trees on the river-banks, the warm, odorous air, all had the charm and fascination of novelty.

By midday the *Bosphorus* was tied up alongside the wharf in Port Adelaide, and the nervous passengers, almost unrecognizable in their shore-going rigs, were hastily piling themselves and their luggage over the side.

My last duty on that day was to restow the mainroyal, and as I stood on the foot-ropes of that sky-scraping yard, and looked over the town and far into the great country beyond, I wondered what Australia had in store for me.

II

"SUNDOWNING"

THERE are no conditions more favorable to the rapid growth of acquaintance and friendship than those on shipboard. There is no place like it, moreover, for wearing a friendship threadbare — for finding people out. Sea-friendships, sea-promises, and sea-plans, I have noticed, are uncertain things at best, and never to be depended upon. Away from conflicting elements and outside influences, unable to see the obstacles, the new roads, which alternately block and open up in the real journey, forgetful that each new day and face and circumstance swings him round in some new direction, the deep-sea traveler pricks off his future course with child-like faith and simplicity. With the first whiff of land, however, his chart goes overboard, and his ways are henceforth governed by the winds and waves of chance.

Two days after the *Bosphorus* arrived at Port Adelaide the shilling-a-month men

were discharged. Sam Watson, my partner, went to see a relative somewhere in the neighborhood, with the hope of raising money for our trip northward, and I paid a visit to some friends in the city of Adelaide, which lies about ten miles inland from the port. We agreed to meet the next day at the post-office.

I proceeded, meanwhile, with youthful pride to buy myself a "bush" outfit. A broad-brimmed felt hat, two flannel shirts, a pair of white moleskin trousers, and a large blue blanket were my purchases; and, with the exception of an old coat, they completed my wardrobe. My other clothes and belongings I arranged to leave with my friends.

Without going into details and giving a full account of my impatience and bitter disappointment, suffice it to say that, at the appointed hour, Sam failed to appear. I waited four days for him. Then I gave him up. I had received my first lesson.

And I think the loss of the stick upon which I leaned so heavily strengthened me. I began to see that I must stand alone — must depend upon myself. But although the set-back somewhat stiffened my backbone, it did not prevent me from feeling rather fearful at the prospect of tackling the bush and the future single-handed. This, it must be remembered, was the first time I had been thrown entirely on my own resources, and I

felt keenly the want of shore experience. To have gone to sea again would have been a very simple matter. On the other hand, I had no confidence ashore, for I knew nothing about it. As for Silverton, indeed, the whole scheme was enveloped in fog. It was a mining-town, and I wanted to get to a mining-town. I knew that. Plans, however, I had none, neither had I the remotest idea what I should do when I got there. Surely never was a project more vague.

Feeling more secure near salt water, I retreated, for further consideration, to the port, and, for the first time, studied the problem practically. Silverton, I found, was just over the border of New South Wales, and about three hundred and fifty miles inland from Adelaide.

One hundred and fifty miles of this could be covered by railway at a cost of about thirteen shillings; for the remainder of the journey there was nothing but the biweekly stage-coach, for which the charge was five pounds — two facts which, standing side by side as they did there, went to prove how much steam has benefited the traveler, not only as regards comfort and speed, but also cheapness. The question of pounds, shillings, and pence already began to trouble me. Although I had seven shillings more than the railway-fare to Terowie (at that time the end of the road), I felt that such a sum was hardly

enough to carry me the two hundred miles that lay between it and Silverton. My curiosity, stubbornness, and love of adventure decided me, however, to try it. Once well back in the bush out of reach of my tempter, the sea, I knew that I should be forced to learn something beyond sailorizing; and that was one of my aims. Indeed, I plunged into Australia much as a man who first leaps into a well, and then considers how he shall get out.

At the eleventh hour I was joined by one of the *Bosphorus* hands, who, having caught the mining fever, like myself, had run away. He was a tall, dark fellow, about twenty-eight years of age, by the name of Tracy. Although we had been in the same forecastle, we were in different watches, and beyond the fact that he was a smart sailor, I knew nothing about him. I was glad, nevertheless, of his company; and when we boarded the northward-bound train together, there was no more cock-sure, enthusiastic "new chum"[1] in the colony of South Australia than I. No sooner had we left Adelaide than I divested myself of what I then considered the galling harness of civilization,— my collar and cuffs,— and threw them out of the car window.

After a long, tedious ride, principally at night, we were roused out about two o'clock in the morning, at Terowie. Following the

[1] Synonymous with "greenhorn," "tenderfoot," etc.

sleepy crowd to the hotel, we were accommodated with beds for the sum of one shilling; and that was the last time for many moons I slept between sheets.

Next morning, not content with the extravagance of a shilling bed, we actually breakfasted in the hotel, and after buying a few pounds of flour, two loaves, a "billy,"[1] and a water-bag,[2] we shouldered our "swags" and headed for Silverton. As we trudged out of the hot, dusty little township of Terowie, my hopes and feelings were of the brightest. I was brimming over with elation and the excitement of my first real adventure. And all this, notwithstanding the facts that I had two hundred miles to walk before I reached the goal of my ambition, and that we had but sixpence left in our pockets!

Before going on with my narrative, I think it well to mention the ubiquitous swag of the Australian bush. In the interior one can travel only in two ways, on horseback or afoot. Those who can afford it have horses, but the great floating population of the country, which is doubtless larger in proportion to its inhabitants than in any other country on earth, depends upon its own legs. There being no hotels except at the townships, both

1 A tin pail, the general cooking-utensil of bush travelers.

2 A canvas article made in the shape of a satchel, with a bottle neck sewed in one of the upper corners. Such is the scarcity of water in the up-country districts of Australia, that, whether afoot or on horseback, no traveler is found without a water-bag.

kinds of travelers must carry their own bedding and other necessaries. Almost invariably the bedding is merely a large blue blanket. In it are rolled a change of clothing, a little flour, tea and sugar, some tobacco, a towel, and a piece of soap. The whole is tightly strapped at either end, and by means of a third connecting strap is slung over the shoulders. This constitutes the swag; and those who carry it are sometimes called "swagsmen." Journeying in this manner is also known as "humping bluey" (carrying the blue blanket), and as being "on the wallaby" (following the track of the wallaby).

The first day Tracy and I made quite a good showing. Despite the heat, the dust, and the heaviness of our swags, we made twenty-five miles, leaving the land of the "cockatoos"[1] behind us, and making a big stride out into the squatters' country, the great red plains of South Australia. Tired as dogs, with skinned shoulders and sore feet, we reached the dam at Errowinna a little after sundown. A wandering blacksmith, with his shop and house on wheels, had temporarily pitched his tents there. He, his wife and large family, were busily flitting about the camp-fires preparing supper. Approaching, we asked if we might boil our billy at their fire, and were promptly invited to share their meal.

[1] Small farmers.

"Aye, coom in an' 'ave a bite wi' us," said the blacksmith, seconding his wife's invitation.

Round the clothless trestle-table in the meal-tent, over a huge platter of unscientifically cut mutton-chops, talk flowed easily. To this great, red-faced Yorkshireman, his cheerful wife, his three strapping sons, and his three comely daughters, we were bearers of news. We were from Adelaide, and lately, moreover, from the "old country." The discovery, also, that I knew the village of Hinderwell, from whence this progressive blacksmith had emigrated four years before, created a bond between us that made us friends at once.

Immediately after supper my mate and I unrolled our swags, placed our groceries and so forth under our heads for pillows, and, wrapping ourselves in our blankets, turned our toes to the blazing logs, and went to sleep. And how we slept! Once I awakened to look out from my blanket into the skyful of stars and think how strange it all was. And how grand! For to sleep on the bare brown earth, thousands of miles from home; to smell the odor-distilling eucalyptus branches of a bush camp-fire; to hear the tinkling bells of the blacksmith's "hobbled" horses; to see a flock of teal winging their way, like a swift black cloud, across the heavens; to feel that I was my own master, and that I had a whole new world before me to experience

and enjoy,—these were the things I had longed for; this was a fulfilment in part of my boyish expectations.

I was aroused next morning by a crow near the camp. The cry of the Australian bird, the most doleful one that can be imagined, so much resembles the wailing of an infant that, in this instance, I was completely deceived.

One or two pannikins of tea, a hunk of bread, a brief good-by to our friends, and we took the road again. The second day, however, was not a success. So stiff and sore were we that, after making about ten miles, we were obliged to give it up. A "water-hole" in the dry bed of a creek served us for a camping-place; and though our "tucker"[1] was none too plentiful, we remained there until the following day.

At this stage my companion's inwardness began to come to the surface. To me, the heat, the short commons, the poor water, and the inconveniences of the road were part of the fun, and, as novelties, things to be laughed at and enjoyed. With Tracy, however, although he had been accustomed to hardship from childhood, it was a very serious matter; and from that time he complained continually, and cursed his foolishness for leaving a good ship. Twice I was obliged to sit down by the roadside and plead with him, to keep him from turning back with the next bullock-team.

[1] Food.

Notwithstanding Tracy's sulkiness and growling, I found so much to interest me that I enjoyed every moment. The curious vegetation of the continent, the flowers, the salt-bush, the trees that shed their bark instead of their leaves, the strange mammalia, the volcanic look of the country, all charmed me because I had seen nothing like them before. Then, too, the slow bullock-wagons we overtook and met, the "bullockies,"[1] and other types of up-country life were interesting. As everything is brought from the sea-coast, the northward-bound bullock-wagons carried a general cargo. When bound southward, however, they were freighted with wool, and then, seen at a distance with their towering loads, they looked like ships.

Perhaps the most interesting types we met were the "sundowners," or tramps; for Australia possesses a variety of vagrant which, like the country itself, is unique.

For tramps, because of its universal hospitality and delightful climate, Australia is an ideal country. There are no hardships of weather, no dangerous wild beasts to contend with, very few clothes required, and there is seldom a night, up-country at least, that a man may not roll himself in his blanket and sleep in comfort.

The sundowner, so called because he invariably claims the hospitality of a "station"[2] at

[1] Bullock-drivers. [2] Ranch.

sundown,— an hour when he knows he will not be turned away empty-handed,— is the white tramp of Australia. He has so long been recognized as a necessary evil that at most stations a "travelers' hut" is now provided for his special accommodation; and a regular ration, usually a pannikin of flour and a pound of meat, is served out to every applicant. In other places, more democratic, the sundowner takes his seat at the table in the men's quarters. He can always depend upon his supper, bed, and breakfast at any station; and he usually steals or begs from the cook sufficient to make a hearty midday meal. If the distances between stations are too far to be traveled in a single day, the swagsman rolls himself in his blanket and camps by the roadside. If the distance be but a few miles, he revels in a genuine holiday, picnics for the day, perhaps, under the shade of a giant gum-tree, and arrives at the station homestead, with all the appearance of a long day's walk, just as the sun is setting.

The third day found us rested and fit for a good day's journey. We walked steadily from sunrise until midday, when the blue smoke of a camp-fire rising from a bunch of mulga-trees, a little off the track, drew my attention, and we bent our steps in that direction. We were anxious to replenish our water-bags, which, being new, leaked considerably. In a few minutes we found a water-hole sunk at

the foot of a blue-gum, and near by, seated upon their swags, three men.

At the first glance I saw that they were regular "up-one-side-the-river-and-down-the-other coasters." Their uncouth appearance, ragged clothing, and unmistakable air of trampdom told the story more plainly than words. Two of them were tall, broad-shouldered fellows, as capable as any in the colony of doing a good day's work. The other was a short old man with a gray beard and sharp eyes, whose tongue at once proclaimed him a Scotchman. Their black billies stood near the fire, and the odor of burnt bread told that "damper" had been made.

"Good day, mates," was the salutation we received; and having made room for us to place our billies on the fire, they began a fusillade of questions, asking us whither we were bound, where from, what were our politics, and, in fact, our entire history. They soon discovered that we were new chums, and at once volunteered much valuable information concerning the road, the stations, and the places where water was to be had.

We found these men generous to a degree. As soon as they saw we had no provisions, they divided their damper and scanty supply of cold mutton with us, as if it were an every-day occurrence — as indeed it was. All were bound for Moorinda, the station for which we were making, and now only about four miles

distant. After a meal, a smoke, and a rest, we would have resumed our journey, but they laughed at us. One of them said:

"You 're green 'uns, you are; how much tucker d' ye s'pose you 'd get at Moorinda at this time o' day? Look at the sun, mates, and sit down."

We looked at the sun,— it was high in the heavens,— and having no wish to walk farther than Moorinda, we took our friends' advice.

That afternoon we spent three lazy, enjoyable hours in the cool shadow of the scented gums that bordered the creek-bed, listening to a lengthy argument between one of the tall men, called Pete, and the old Scotchman, who went by the name of Sandy. The subject was politics, and I must say that I was astonished at their knowledge. The shadows of the eucalypti grew long before Sandy finished the argument by saying:

"Weel, I 'll no say but ye 're richt on some wee bit points; but on general principles, man, ye 're waefully wrang."

Then we threw the straps of our swags across our shoulders and headed for Moorinda station.

"Noo, boys," said Sandy, cautiously, "ye 'll mind, if we 're asked, that we 're a' frae Winch's Gully."

As an actual fact they had been camped at the water-hole since the night before.

Arriving at the station just as the sun was sinking below the plain, we inquired for the "super" (superintendent). To this gentleman, Sandy, who acted as spokesman, addressed himself, asking if there was any fencing, dam-sinking, or other work to be done on the station.

The manager of Moorinda smiled rather wearily, I thought, and replied:

"You can go down to the kitchen and get your supper. I suppose that is what you want."

"Thank ye, sir, and kindly," said Sandy, as we turned to go.

"Hold on a minute, though," said the manager. "I believe you 're the men who camped at the water-hole last night about four miles from here."

"No, sir," replied Sandy, with well-assumed dignity. "Without disrespeckit, I must contradeect ye. We 're frae Winch's Gully, sir."

"All right," said the super; "go ahead, then."

During this conversation I felt very uncomfortable, but my fellow-"swaggers" seemed to enjoy the joke.

A hearty supper, a bunk in the travelers' hut, and a bountiful breakfast, put me in good trim for the next day's journey. Pete and the other tall man took a cross-track, while the old Scotchman, Tracy, and I

tramped northward together. We made twenty miles and a station named Bilpah by sundown, and received a pannikin of flour and a pound of meat as rations.

Several bullock-teams had camped close to the station that night, and we joined them, roasting our mutton and baking our damper at their hospitable fire, and sleeping under the wagons.

Sandy remained with us all the way to Silverton. Sometimes we camped alone, and at other times we had more sundowners for company. There is one part of the road we traveled on which it is sixty miles between stations. About half-way there is a pool, called Wallaby Camp, and this place, the rendezvous of every bullockie or horseman within twenty miles, is expected by the sundowner to prove a camp as good as a station, that is, a place where he is sure of finding tucker.

It so happened that when we, with three other sundowners whom we had picked up, reached Wallaby Camp, we found nothing but the smoldering ashes of fires kindled by teams which had come and gone. We had walked thirty miles that day,—no mean tramp under a broiling sun and a heavy swag,—and we all felt pretty glum at the prospect of going supperless to bed. Throwing down our dusty swags, we sat wearily upon them, disappointment on every face.

"There 's no fear of deespepsy the nicht, boys," said Sandy, with a grim smile. "Aye, but it 's fine not to be bothered wi' owermuch in the stomach."

"It 's all bloomin' fine to make fun of it," replied one of the other swaggers; "but, for my part, Hi can't see as 'ow it 's hennythink to laugh about."

"Weel," answered Sandy, testily, "ye 'll no be sayin' but that it 's better to laugh nor cry? Just get a billy o' tea into ye, man, an' tak a gude smoke, an' if ye 'll only stop thinkin' of the fleshpots of Egypt I 'll warrant ye 'll never know whether ye 've had supper or no."

"'Ow can ye stop thinkin' of wittles when yer hinsides is a-rubbin' together, I 'd like to know," grumbled the cockney. "I 'm sure the 'ardships men 'as to put hup with in this 'ere bloomin' country is somethink hawful."

At this there was a general laugh.

About sundown a few stray sheep came down the opposite side of the pool to drink.

"Man, man," whispered Sandy, looking wistfully at the little flock, "but yon 's a sair temptation."

"Toss yer who kills the fat wether!" said one of the men, walking up to the Scotchman.

"No, no, man! I 'll neither gamble nor steal," answered Sandy. "But if my eyesicht doesna fail me, that same wether is lame in

the fore feet; an' if I 'm no wrang, it would be a kindness to put the puir doited beastie oot o' its meesery."

"Ye 're right, Sandy," said the man.

All wore such grave faces and appeared to be in such earnest that I could scarcely keep from laughter.

"Well, who 's to do it?" asked some one.

"Come," said Sandy to the man who had last spoken; "we 'll baith go." Turning to us, he said: "Ye 'll mind, mates, that it 's a deed o' mercy we 're aboot to do." Upon this they disappeared in the scrub.

The rest of us sat down silently around the fire, and listened. In a few minutes there was a sound of sheep scurrying through the underbrush, then the plaintive bleat of a solitary wether.

Soon after the men returned, carrying the dead sheep between them. All hands now set to work. The carcass was quickly skinned, cleaned, and suspended from a branch of dead-wood, and in less than half an hour from the time we had first seen the fat wether, "leg-chops" were spluttering over the fire.

That part of the sheep which could not be eaten, or cooked to carry away, was carefully buried with the pelt.

On the road to Silverton we fell in with a great number of swagsmen. Some were men returning from a "spree" in the city, heading toward distant stations to put in an-

other year or two of hard work; others were merely moving from one part of the country to another. Still others were genuine sundowners, traveling with a carelessness and independence which could come only from the certainty of a good supper awaiting them at the next station.

Among them were some extraordinary characters. One man I shall never forget. He was the dirtiest, most unkempt, besotten specimen of a sundowner that I ever saw, and yet he had the hand and speech of a gentleman. This man was a lawyer — a Q. C.— whose name was once known throughout the colonies. The last time I saw him he was lying hopelessly drunk outside a bush "pub," where he afterward died.

The bush hotels, or pubs, as they are called, are the curse of the interior. They do not pretend to offer other accommodation to the traveler than an unlimited quantity of "shepherds' delight."[1]

During the whole two hundred miles from Terowie to Silverton we were never refused a meal. When stations were long distances apart, we kept the wagon-road, and with the one exception which I have cited, we always fell in with bullockies, with whom it is considered an insult not to stop and at least drink a pannikin of tea.

I am indebted to Sandy for a great deal

[1] Spirits.

of information regarding the life and habits of the Australian tramp; and before we parted we became great cronies. We often argued on the subject of sundowning, he for and I against, and I must admit that he usually got the best of it. Sandy was a philosopher of the Diogenes type, and a thorough old pessimist. From his point of view he had certainly chosen the calling most suited to him.

Among other things, the old Scotchman taught me how to cook that mainstay of bush existence — damper. It is a very simple concoction, merely flour and water; but to make it is an art — at least, it is an art to make it edible. Using a piece of bark or canvas for a pasteboard, the ingredients are mixed to a doughy consistency, flattened to about an inch in thickness, and placed upon the glowing embers of a wood fire. The mixture is then covered with more hot coals, and, after ten minutes' baking and a rough scrape, is considered fit to eat.

Damper is at its best when hot, before it has had time to resolve itself into a leaden lump of indigestibleness. In its cold state it should be indulged in only under extreme provocation, and never when creeks are to be swum. And yet, with a large proportion of the inhabitants of the "back blocks," it is damper and mutton, mutton and damper, from one year's end to another. No vegetables, no fish, no other kinds of meat, no variety —

nothing but freshly killed mutton and this famous bush bread. The boundary rider's weekly ration is "ten, ten, two, and a quarter," which, being interpreted, means ten pounds of mutton, ten pounds of flour, two pounds of sugar, and one quarter of a pound of tea.

The Australian tramp is of a type wholly different from the ignorant, low-bred scum of humanity that one meets in some countries, and from the whining professional beggar of Europe or America.

As a class these tramps are well informed, fairly moral, and, as the world goes, honest. The sundowner stands apart from the rest of his kind, inasmuch as he *never begs for money.* He will ask for a pipeful of tobacco or a drink, a meal or a bunk; but for the coin of the realm he does not petition. He is a contented philosopher, with all the instincts of a nobleman; born, of course, under an unlucky star, yet satisfied with his lot so long as he is not obliged to work, and so long as the "squatters" feed him. Although many of them have grown gray in the service, and their hands have not been soiled with work for years, they are without care for the morrow, worrying not a whit "what they shall eat, or what they shall drink, or wherewithal they shall be clothed," for the winter brings no chilling blasts, and the bush is ever hospitable.

One is constantly surprised at the speech and manners of those whom one meets on the road, and it is probable that fully one third are men who were born of gentle parents in the "older countries." Australia being an English colony, the sundowner is usually a native of the British Isles, though there is a sprinkling of other nationalities in proportion to their number in the colonies. It is due to the native-born Australians to say that they seldom turn tramps.

Although against his principles, it must be said, to the sundowner's credit, that he does sometimes work. There are times when even he feels the need of a change. At shearing-time, when the sheds are full of jolly shearers, and good wages may be demanded, he will often work for a few weeks; or he may find some other easy way that suits his fastidious fancy. With the proceeds he buys himself a few clothes, perhaps, and "knocks down" (spends) the remainder at the first bush public. Some there are who wander aimlessly from one colony to another, ever seeking new paths; others, more methodical, have a regular route laid out, which takes from two to three years to cover. In this way they do not visit the same station often enough to be recognized.

Sundowning is the outgrowth of the boundless and unequaled hospitality of the Australian bush. The occasional sundown petitioner

of the old days, however, had now become an army. To-day the squatter fears this wandering tramp, and feeds him under protest, knowing well that by refusing him he runs the risk of having a woolshed burned down or some of his fat sheep killed. Some day the up-country community will put their heads together and stop this imposition, but at present the sundowner continues his petty system of blackmail with singular success.

Ten days of heavy trudging over the great red plains, ten days of relentless skies, of choking dust, of blinding sweat, and at last there rose before us the rugged outlines of the Barrier. It was a pleasant change in the landscape, and, to Tracy and me, a most inspiriting sight, for we knew that we had but to cross the range to be in Silverton. So that we might camp at the foot of the hills that night, we walked on long after sundown; and after we had made our camp-fire, we sat around the blaze for a longer time than usual, talking of the morrow. And to me, I remember, it was as though we had made a sea-voyage and were upon the eve of entering a new port. I felt as did the passengers of the *Bosphorus* the night before we reached Adelaide.

At sunrise, next morning, we were toiling upward. Past the shaft and chimney of the Umberumberka mine we climbed, past the few shanties of a premature township, up

through the narrow, rocky road of the gap, until we stood, panting, at the summit of the ridge, looking down upon the promised land — Silverton.

Clustering near the center of a broad plain, from which the rocky Barrier Range sprang abruptly on all sides, lay the little mining-town. Although it was principally made up of small white buildings and tents, the regular laying out of its streets and squares showed that it was an ambitious place and ready to grow.

A brief rest, and we started briskly down the mountain-side, down toward the well-grassed plain, the winding lines of vivid green that marked the watercourses, and to the greatest silver-mining camp of Australia.

After humping bluey across the plains, and tasting all the delights of the sundowner's nomadic existence; after stolen mutton and leaden damper; after warm, muddy dam-water, and the brackish liquid of the driven wells; after days under the blazing sun, and nights under the Southern Cross; after scrub and salt-bush, blue-gum and wattle; after shearers, stockmen, "rouse-abouts," bullockies, and all the glamour of the limitless bush, we had reached the point for which we had set out. Sandy bade us good-by at the cross-roads outside the settlement, and Tracy and I, with our billies rattling, and an all-conquering air, swung into the township of Silverton.

III

AT THE SILVER-FIELDS

IN places where men congregate, sympathy is a thing not easily roused, and charity but a rare blossom. Strengthened by the support of numbers, hardened by constant appeals, critical by reason of many deceits, the Australian town-dweller, like most of his kind, does not extend the hospitality so universal in the bush. I had this instilled into me by my friend and fellow-sundowner,— the shrewdest student of human nature I have ever met,— Sandy. And having learned this lesson by heart, I entered Silverton with the knowledge that if I would remain there I must at once get work. As soon, therefore, as we had found a place to leave our swags, Tracy and I started off, independently, in search of something to do.

Although I knew no trade, business, or profession, my sea-apprenticeship had made me handy, and, more than this, it had taught me how to work hard and obey. I was,

moreover, luckily, free from prejudice as to the kind of work I should undertake.

I commenced at the lee side of the town and tacked my way up the straggling main street, taking in everything. Stores, hotels, assayers' offices, restaurants, banks, bars, — nothing escaped me. I applied at every business building in Silverton — first confidently, then with hope, and then in disgust. In spite of my evident willingness to work, and my sweeping statement in reply to all inquiries that I could "do anything," no one gave me the slightest encouragement.

Late in the afternoon, tired, hungry, and in no very pleasant mood, I met Tracy. I found him smiling and happy. After going through a part of my experience, he had given up the quest, and had forthwith made arrangements with a bullockie to work his passage back to Terowie again. This appealed to me as rank cowardice, and I told him so, whereupon we disgorged everything we had laid up against each other during the previous two weeks. He called me a "cocky little ass," and advised me to go home to my mother; and I retaliated by naming him a "big, hulking coward," and informing him theatrically that, rather than turn tail like him, I would starve on the streets of Silverton. After all this, and very much more, we finally patched up our friendship sufficiently to shake hands and say good-by.

Poor Tracy! He was a misguided sailorman who had wandered too far from salt water, and it frightened him. At sunrise, next morning, he started back toward Adelaide, and I never heard of him again. Although Tracy was such a poor sort of friend, I felt very blue and very lonely when he was gone. For, after all, Tracy was the last strand connecting me with home.

For two days I besieged the town of Silverton. Early and late I besought the inhabitants to give me work. I lived, during this time, mainly upon the bounty of a Chinaman who cooked for a low hostelry. I slept in one of the many deserted huts on the outskirts of the township. These huts, like most of the up-country buildings in Australia, were merely rough wooden frames covered with large sheets of corrugated, galvanized iron. The number of untenanted ones was accounted for by the fact that owners of township lots were obliged to lay out a certain sum on improvements, and speculators held many lots by putting up such huts as I have described. There were whole streets of them, all built on the same plan, and occupied for the most part by men out of work, and the many vagabond, dissolute characters of a mining community.

I quickly found a new companion. He was a young, good-looking fellow named Griffiths, an East Indian by birth, and the son of an

army officer. Although there was nothing indicative in his appearance, I knew him for a gentleman as soon as he spoke; and he evidently recognized something similar in me, for we came together at once. He had been knocking about the colonies for two or three years, but, like me, was new to Silverton, and in search of employment.

On the third day I was made happy by getting temporary work. A storekeeper, wearying of my importunities, perhaps, set me to digging a foundation for a stable he was about to build. I was young, strong, unversed in the art of "sogering," and I went at the job as though my whole future depended on it. And the "good old Mr. Port" was so pleased with my endeavors that when I had finished the foundation he gave me a position in his store. It was not anything very grand, yet, had I been made manager of a bank, it could not have given me more pleasure. I was installed as a combination of boy and general utility-man. I opened and swept out the store, ran errands, looked after two horses, loaded and unloaded wagons of general merchandise, and did what I was told.

In return for this I received the weekly wages of one pound, and was allowed to sleep in the store. I invariably camped on the dry-goods counter; and I still have a vivid recollection of the smell of the ready-made trousers that nightly served as my pillow.

My employer's first move was to test my honesty, which he did in such a transparent manner that it was truly laughable. The first few days that I swept out the store I always found pieces of money on the floor; and once he gave me a basket of eggs to count, in which I discovered a half-crown.

After a few weeks my wages were increased to £1 10*s.* per week, and I was made driver on the delivery wagon. As this work took me to all the camps and claims within thirty miles of Silverton, I was exceedingly pleased at the change.

For a spell I rose with the sun, fed my horses, loaded my wagon, and drove off merrily to make my bush deliveries. Twice a week I took the main wagon-road leading northward, dropping my heterogeneous cargo at the little townships and pubs as far as Purnamoota, where I camped for the night and returned next day. On other days I followed the indistinct tracks which led to small shafts and mining properties scattered through the mountains.

This I enjoyed most, for I met the miners, went down the shafts, and learned much about ores, minerals, hanging walls, leads, indications, and so forth.

After a brief time I gave up sleeping in Mr. Port's store, and, with Griffiths for a mate, I attached one of the deserted huts and went to housekeeping, or, as they say there,

went "baching." Griffiths being out of work, and unable, therefore, to share expenses, evened things up by doing the cooking. He was such a charming fellow that I felt extraordinarily fortunate in having found so good a chum. And I have never regretted that I knew him, even though his habits annoyed me (he drank rather hard, unfortunately), and in spite of the fact that, after a month or so, he and the first new pair of trousers I was able to buy disappeared together.

After Griffiths came one Otto, a fat, bearded German, who, when he worked, was a carpenter; also a sharp young native from Sydney, whose name was Tate. As Otto was another heavy drinker, and Tate combined liquor with gambling, my nights were somewhat disturbed. Tate and I had words about it one evening, and finally went outside in the dark to decide whether they should leave the hut or I. In the intermittent diary I kept of those days, I find the following:

> Started at five this morning for Purnamoota. Had dinner out there of wild turkey (delicious), and got back, after a forty-mile drive, at half-past six. Got into a row with Tate in the evening, and we fought for the ownership of the shanty. After one long round (there were no breathing-spells) he acknowledged himself licked, and Otto and he took their swags and went away. Thank God!

Then there came other fellows — a miner, whom I pumped dry of information during

his two weeks' stay, a shepherd, and several nondescripts. Although none of them, from first to last, helped to victual the camp, it did not seem strange to me, for I had already seen so much of this same sort of thing that I looked upon it as a necessary part of up-country experience, and I often turned into the empty galvanized-iron case, which served as my bed, chuckling to think how funny it all was.

Notwithstanding my large family, I saved money. As at the end of some four months I had eight pounds that I did not know what to do with, I began to look about for a good investment. I decided to "take up" an acre of land outside the township limits, and there build a residence. This, on the face of it, may seem an undertaking out of proportion to my means. I hasten, therefore, to explain that the residence was to be merely a hole in the ground with a roof over it, and that the cost of the land, survey and registration included, would be but £2 3*s*. 6*d*. Houses of this kind, partly on the score of economy, and partly because of their coolness, were common in Silverton.

For the carrying out of this project I took into partnership a fair-haired young Londoner by the name of Frank Alcroft. He was about my age, and he worked in an auctioneer's office. As he had no money, I agreed to stand the expenses, on condition

that he would help me build the house and pay his share when he was able. With this understanding, we both obtained a two weeks' vacation, and set to work.

Never do I remember laughing so much as I did over the digging and roofing of that cellar. Neither of us knew anything about mechanics, and our constant blunders and arguments as to the right and the wrong way of doing things were comical beyond description. After we squared up an 18 × 12 cellar, peaked the roof, nailed on the sheets of iron, put a small window in one end, and a door, with steps leading down, in the other, we gave the whole a liberal coat of whitewash, and went back to our regular work with all the airs and graces of master builders.

About this time I composed my first home letter, in which I mentioned incidentally that I was a landowner and had just finished building a house in the suburbs!

We did not live in the house after all. Convinced after a few weeks' trial that it was not convenient enough, we let it to a washerwoman and her three daughters, for a rent, to be paid in washing, of five shillings a month.

Silverton on ordinary occasions was dull enough. With the exception of the mail-coach, which rolled in with its load of dusty, tired passengers twice a week, there was little excitement from one week's end to an-

other. Saturday nights, however, were not ordinary occasions. Then the miners from the Broken Hill, the Daybreak, the Umberumberka, and the smaller mines flocked into town with wages to spend. The prospectors from the surrounding hills came in for provisions; the small contractors, the "tucker-men," and all the rough and scruff within ten miles, piled into Silverton.

About nine o'clock the main street would be black with men; scores of horses would be hitched to the verandas; and every pub and billiard-hall and gambling-room would be in full swing. On these nights we kept the store open until eleven o'clock, and, as there was always a stress of business, I was temporarily placed behind the counter to weigh out groceries, *et cetera*. One evening, when I was struggling to tie up a respectable-looking package,—a thing which I have not learned to do yet,—some one leaned over the counter and took my hand. I looked up, and found, to my surprise, that I was face to face with my old *Bosphorus* friend, Sam Watson.

The sight of Sam immediately set my mind in a whirl. As I had no time to talk just then, we agreed to meet after closing-hour, until which time I worked with more or less excitement. For, after six months in that land of strangers, it was not only a godsend to see a friend again, but I knew that here at last was my opportunity to be a miner.

Sam frankly explained that he had failed to keep his appointment with me in Adelaide because, in the first place, he had to wait several days for his brother, and, in the second place, because he had gone on a spree. This explanation was, of course, entirely satisfactory to me, as for several years I had been educated to the idea that a sailor who did not go on a spree after a voyage was a very odd animal, and certainly unfit to be rated as an able seaman.

Sam had come up to Silverton with an ore-crusher, which he had a contract to set up. When that was finished, he told me, he should be ready to go prospecting, and would take me with him.

A few weeks later, I astonished Mr. Port by giving him a week's notice. He thereupon preached me a long sermon on the idiocy of youth in general, to which I listened with pretended meekness and patience.

On the 24th of December, the day before Christmas, Sam and I, with brand-new fly-nets hanging from our hat-rims, and hob-nailed miners' boots upon our feet, started for the hills. In addition to our swags, billies, and water-bags, we carried a small tent, a pick, and a shovel. Sam's plans were that we should follow the Barrier Range eastward, travel slowly, and thoroughly cover the ground. Our course having thus been set, Sam took the lead, and we went, single file,

over Hospital Hill, and up into the wild, rocky solitudes of the Barrier.

Next day we ate our Christmas dinner at the foot of a purple ironstone peak fifteen miles from Silverton. Considering the situation, it was a grand spread. We had canned chicken, canned pease, canned plum-pudding, and canned peaches; it was, in fact, a canned Christmas.

For weeks we clambered over the jagged surface of that grand but desolate region — a region without grass, flowers, trees, birds, or odor, and in which the only living things were rock-wallabies, snakes, iguanas, and innumerable insects. We picked one day, perhaps, upon a craggy, hog-backed mountain, and dug the next day in the boulder-filled gullies at its base; now following the track of the wallabies at some dizzy height, now stumbling through the snake-haunted gorges far below; ever alert to examine a strange formation, an outcrop, a reef, a ledge, an odd-looking piece of rock; ever searching keenly for indications of precious metal. At night we pitched our tent wherever sundown found us. After a supper of tea, damper, and sometimes a slice or two of toasted bacon, there came the final, sleepy pipe. And then we stretched ourselves in weary comfort upon our rocky beds, to sleep with a soundness and freedom from care unknown to civilization. Once a week Sam or I went into the township for

provisions. This trip took longer and longer each time, until, at last, Sam decided that we had gone far enough, and we crossed to the opposite side of the range to work our way back gradually to Silverton. So far we had found nothing but a galena lode, too small to be made payable. I congratulated myself, however, upon getting a very fair, practical knowledge of mineralogy.

Between the northern and the southern slope of the Barrier we found a vast difference in the scenery, and for my part I was glad of it; for on the north the solemnity of the echoing and barren basalt, of the sheer precipice, of the fissured rock masses, was depressing. The melancholy gray of everything, moreover, gave to the mountains a look so weird, so lonesome, and so mysterious, that, in spite of my natural light-heartedness, they would sometimes affect my spirits. No sooner did we reach the southern flank of the range, however, than all this was changed. Though still rocky and irregular, the slopes were well wooded with black Australian pine and white-gums. In the open spaces, coarse grass, salt-bush, wait-a-bits, and many evergreen shrubs had climbed up from the yellow, undulating, sea-like plain, which stretched away beneath us to the sky-line. Bright-plumaged parrots, cockatoos, and other birds filled the air with their strange, harsh notes; and there were great

flocks of that easily tamed and handsome bird, the Australian magpie. Here, too, we occasionally startled a bunch of brush-turkeys to wing, or sent a family of kangaroos down the mountain-side with flying leaps. Water we found in plenty, also an abundance of native peaches. In comparison with the northern side, it was, indeed, a fair country.

By the time we made our way back within five miles of Silverton, things began to look serious. Not only had we struck nothing, but Sam's money and mine was exhausted, and we were refused further credit for provisions. We were upon our last week, therefore, and though we laughed about it, both of us felt rather downhearted. It has always been my experience, however, that just at such times as these, when hope seems hopeless, something turns up. And this was no exception. We had but three days' tucker left when we struck it, and, in the vernacular of the mining-camp, we struck it rich!

It came about in a simple, unexpected way, and entirely by accident. We had finished our midday meal, and sat, propped against our swags, silently puffing at our pipes. Early in the morning we had crossed an old track, leading probably to some deserted workings near by, and I had picked up on it a small piece of light, honeycombed material that I could not place. As Sam was some distance away at the time, I put it in my pocket, in-

tending to ask him about it later. As we sat there, I thought of it again, and, tossing it over to him, said: "Say, Sam, here 's a curious bit of stuff I found this morning. It looks volcanic. What is it?"

He looked at it a moment and laughed.

"I don't wonder it puzzled you, sonny," he said. "It 's a piece of coke, dropped from a wagon going to a camp-forge, probably."

Sam threw the coke back to me, and, for want of something better to do, I began pounding it between two fragments of rock. The piece in my hand suddenly split. From habit, I examined the fracture. It was partly hollow, and filled with grapelike clusters of a dark-green substance. "Well, here 's something new, anyway," I said. "What 's that, Sam?"

As he took the stone, I noted a swift change of expression in my partner's set and grizzled face. Without speaking, he drew out a small pocket-knife and brought it to bear upon the green part. It cut like wax.

"Chloride silver, by ——!" he exclaimed. "Where did you find it?"

I showed him the exact spot, and instantly he was upon his knees, searching excitedly among the small, broken rock with which the hillside was strewn. I quickly joined him, but though we scanned every inch of the ground for some distance round, we found no more like it. Sam then stood up and scruti-

nized the specimen again. As a whole, the stone was almost round, and the outside much weathered.

"It does n't belong here, that 's certain," he remarked, as he thoughtfully turned it over. "It 's rolled downhill, and, being round, it 's probably rolled a long way."

"Surely it could n't have come through that," I said, pointing to a thick belt of scrub above us.

"Lord!" he answered, "that 's nothing. That scrub may not have been there fifty years, and this stone may have been slowly washing down for fifty thousand years, for all we know. We 'll work upward and try it, anyhow."

With our noses close to earth, we took a direct line toward the summit of the range. On emerging from the wooded belt, we again found ourselves upon a barren, rock-strewn slope. About a hundred yards above us rose a small hill with a black, uneven crest. Between the scrub and the hill we picked up three more pieces of rock like the first, only smaller; and in the dry watercourse which swung round the base of the spur we found much more. This, in Sam's mind, settled the question.

"Yonder 's our pile, lad!" he said, pointing upward, and lapsing into his native Yorkshire dialect, as he was wont to do when roused. "Come, lend me the pick." And

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up the rugged side of the little hill he went, with an agility that I found hard to equal.

Upon reaching the crest, we found a ridge of dark-gray outcrop running north and south along its entire length — a distance of perhaps fifty feet. A few minutes' work convinced us that it was the source of the rich specimen we had first discovered, and in less than an hour we laid bare a seam of ore some seven feet in width, dipping at an angle of about forty-five degrees between two well-defined walls. Never, though I live a century round, shall I forget the excitement, the crazy joy, that possessed me, body and soul, that day.

In the midst of our rejoicing, it suddenly occurred to Sam that neither of us had taken out a "miner's right" or license, and that, in consequence, we could not legally "peg out our claim." We could, of course, have put in our pegs then and there, and afterward gone into Silverton for the papers, and in all probability no one would have been the wiser. As Sam thought, however, that it would be safer to do the thing lawfully, he left me to hold the claim down, and started over the hills to the township.

That afternoon was a gloriously happy one for me. Stretched at full length upon the rocky crest, with my hat pulled over my eyes, I lay building air-castles and dreaming of the future until Sam's return.

My partner had done well. In something

less than four hours he had walked ten miles, borrowed a pound, taken out a miner's right, and obtained an ax "on tick."

We set to work at once to cut four stakes and pace out the regulation size of a New South Wales mining-claim. At each corner we drove in one of our pegs, and made a right angle of stones. Then we gathered up a handkerchief full of the best ore specimens we had found, and made our way to an assayer's office in Silverton.

Though it was past eight o'clock, the assayer consented to test the ore for us that night; and I, at least, watched the process with an interest that was well-nigh breathless. After weighing, crushing, and smelting, he at last drew from the crucible a button of bright metal, which, when reweighed, showed a result of no less than thirty-five per cent. pure silver.

The news of our rich find went through Silverton on wings. That night we held court in the big bar-room of the Royal Hotel, the recipients of the barmaids' most seductive smiles, and the center of an admiring, though envious, crowd — all of whom, barmaids included, got drunk at our expense. For the shrewd proprietor of the Royal had already placed "his ox and his ass, and everything that was his," at our disposal.

Next day we pegged out two more claims adjoining the first — one in my name, and the

other in the name of my house-partner, Frank Alcroft. At the same time practically everything within sight of our claims was taken up by speculators. Prospectors swarmed in our neighborhood, and the stony hillside blossomed out into white tents and red shirts.

As the experts who visited our claim declared it a "magnificent property," a "second Broken Hill," and so forth, we used the credit that was offered us without stint or measure. We put four men to work sinking a shaft, bought tools, explosives, tents, a portable forge, and everything necessary for opening the mine. Our own quarters we took up at the Royal Hotel, where we lived with all the luxury that Silverton could afford. We drove to the claim in the handsomest buckboard and behind the fastest horses in the hotel stables; we gave big dinners, paid exorbitant prices for artificial ice wherewith to cool our drinks, and were altogether as extravagant as we could be. From poor, unknown prospectors we had suddenly become two of the most talked-about personages in the township. We met everybody in Silverton that was anybody, were "written up" in the weekly newspaper, and were hailed as bosom friends by all those who previously had merely the honor of our acquaintance. Although I do not think that either of us put on any "side" during this period, still I know, and am free to confess, that both of us enjoyed it hugely.

As we had no capital to develop the mine

on a large scale, Sam, to whom I left all such things, decided that our best plan would be to organize a stock company, and proceed to float it in Sydney for the modest sum of one hundred thousand pounds. With this idea in view, we placed the matter in the hands of a firm experienced in such things, and with a blissful feeling that our futures were well provided for, we rested on our laurels and enjoyed ourselves to the utmost. In the meantime, work at the claim was progressing most favorably. The lode maintained its richness, increasing in width as the shaft went down.

While things were in this condition, we were approached by a local company and offered a cool thirty thousand pounds in cash for the mine as it stood. Such is the grasping nature of man, however, that at that time fifteen thousand pounds apiece seemed a nonsensically small sum, and with scant consideration we turned the offer down.

We christened our claim the "Silver Crest." It was an appropriate name, and it looked well in the prospectus. It was a name, we also thought, well calculated to catch the buyers of mining stocks in Sydney. But alas and alack! it was destined that our gorgeous prospectus should never tempt the unwary speculator; it was decreed that Silver Crest stock should be neither quoted nor known, and fated that the two poor fools who had refused a small fortune for their chances should kick themselves forever after.

IV

DESERTED

THE beginning of this chapter is an ideal place to moralize a bit, to shake one's head, and declare one's self against the folly of youth, the sin of extravagance, the wickedness of gambling with the best years of one's life, and the "pride that cometh before a fall." Unfortunately, however, the moralist and I seldom agree; I am too much charmed by human nature as a whole to decry its most interesting phases. Moralizing, moreover, is such an easy thing — almost as easy as seeing our mistakes after we have made them. I shall refrain, therefore, from drawing any conclusions, and proceed with my narrative.

The shaft of the Silver Crest had been put down about twelve feet when the crash came. I arrived at the claim one morning to find the windlass stationary, the men standing round idle, and Sam, sitting at the bottom of the hole, swearing like a lost pirate.

"What 's up, Sam?" I asked, looking down and laughing at him.

"Come down here and I 'll show you," he replied gruffly.

With some misgiving I stuck the peg in the windlass to keep the rope from unwinding, and slid down beside him. Taking me by the shoulders, he turned my face toward the side of the shaft.

"Look at it! Look at it!" he said fiercely.

We had sunk the shaft on the full width of the lode, and as I glanced up I saw only a clean face of ore all the way to the surface. On looking down, however, I discovered a change. Abreast of my knees the broad seam quickly narrowed, then became funnel-shaped, and finally, in a streak no thicker than my finger, ended. The foot-wall and hanging wall had suddenly come together and cut off the lead.

I gasped: "Why, it 's all gone, Sam!"

"Aye, lad, she 's pinched off, dang 'er! She 's pinched off!" And he fell to swearing again.

It took me a few moments to realize fully our position. Then it dawned upon me that the much-vaunted Silver Crest was no more than a surface pocket, and that all my ambitious plans, all the pleasures, surprises, and self-satisfying things I had piled up for future accomplishment, were, by that one morning's work, quashed and made impossible. And not only that! It was a stunning blow to my pride; for, after the splurge we had made, I

felt that ridicule would follow our failure. It was my first great disappointment, and it hurt.

Sam "fossicked" about at the bottom of the shaft for half an hour or so, I gloomily watching him. Then, with a thoughtful face, he sat down and began mechanically to cut up a pipeful of tobacco.

"Well, Sam," I said, "what 's to be done?"

His reply, condensed, was that we should first strip the mine of all the ore in sight, send it to the mill, and convert it into cash. We were then to pay off our debts and continue sinking the shaft ourselves. For Sam was firm in his belief that, sooner or later, the lode would make again. "It 's there," he said, pointing downward; "and it 's only a question of getting down deep enough. We may open it up again before we 've sunk six foot." There was some encouragement in this, and I turned to most willingly to help strip the pocket.

As soon as the ore was taken out and bagged, we discharged our crew of miners, gave up our quarters at the Royal, and settled down to camp life on the claim.

Although we realized almost one thousand pounds on our ore, our debts were so large that when they were paid we had only about two hundred pounds in hand. At this time, it being rather a hard matter to determine whether we should continue our search for

silver at the Crest, or whether we should divide our money and try our luck elsewhere, we flipped a penny for a decision. It came down "head," and we stayed.

And then came a period of honest activity —a time when we picked, wedged, drilled, and blasted our way down through the solid rock, down into subterranean darkness, toward the bowels of the earth. Day after day, with hopeful souls, we followed that *ignis fatuus*, the thread of ore, which led, we knew, to the mother-lode and fortune. Sam, with praiseworthy patience, taught me everything. I learned to swing a hammer with either hand, to hold a drill so that it would not "lock," to tamp, gad, and fire a shot as well as most miners. He also taught me to sharpen and temper a drill, to point a pick, to make rawhide buckets, and many of the tricks and shifts he had picked up during his manifold experience. For me it was certainly a liberal education in rock-mining and bush handicraft — things which, since that time, have served me in good stead.

For the first few weeks we went into Silverton only when we needed provisions, water, or other necessaries. The fact was, we were blasé, and that *sheoak* (native beer), flash barmaids, billiards, gambling, free fights, and the other delights of town, had lost their charm. After a while, however, this I-'ve-seen-it-all feeling wore away, and we were

glad to relieve the monotony of our life on the claim by joining the Saturday-night crowd. After which I was wont to prop Sam up over the five miles of rocky track that led to our hillside camp. I trust that the reader will make special note of this, as it is possible that Sam may write his experiences, and I have no doubt that he will be ungrateful enough to insist that the duty of propping was his.

It is said that one may become accustomed to anything. Whether this statement can be accepted in its entirety or not is more than I can say; but that one may get used to danger and be thoughtless of its consequences, I can vouch for. To those whose lives are spent in business and other quiet callings this may seem strange. I think, however, that the truth of it will be acknowledged by those who have followed occupations involving bodily risk and hardship. When Sam and I began sinking our shaft, he invariably took upon himself the particular and dangerous work. Sam it was who, at first, always lighted the fuses, went below after the shots, and did everything of a like nature. In course of time, we took such things by turns, and it was then that I realized how careless of danger one may become.

You perhaps know that, in preparing for a blast, it is necessary first to drill a hole. If dynamite be used, as in our case, the detonat-

ing cap is fitted on to the end of the fuse, and both are firmly pushed into the stick of explosive. Fuse, cap, and dynamite thus being connected, they are then lowered into the hole, the end of the fuse only remaining visible. Now, instead of directly lighting the end of the fuse, the careful miner bends it over, and places a small piece of lighted candle underneath the "bight." This serves two purposes: it economizes fuse, and, as it takes a minute or so for the flame to reach the powder, it gives more time for the man below to ascend safely. It is also a safeguard against "defective fuse," that is, fuse that burns too rapidly and causes the explosion before it is due.

We were down about forty feet, I think, when one noontime, having put in three good charges, Sam, with the aid of a rope for the purpose, pulled himself up the jagged lower side of our slanting shaft, while I remained below to put the finishing touches to the fuses. A shout from above assured me that all was ready. Placing one foot in the bowline, or loop, at the end of the hoist-rope, I arranged my three candle-ends under their respective fuses, and sung out to be pulled up. The line tautened instantly, and I went up toward the sunlight, thinking about a fox-terrier I wanted to buy. For a few yards the slant of the shaft caused my feet to drag, and when I reached the perpendicular part, I be-

gan to swing violently from side to side. Holding on to the rope with one hand, I tried to steady myself with the other. My exertion, however, was useless. About half-way up my head struck against the hanging wall with such force that, for an instant, I lost consciousness, and dropped. I landed on the foot-wall and rolled downward, tearing my hands on the sharp rock edges in a vain effort to stop myself. Within a few feet of the lighted mine my clothing caught on a jutting piece of rock, and there I hung, yelling with might and main for the rope, and expecting each moment to be blown to atoms. I forgot, in my terror, that, because of the slant at the lower part of the shaft, the rope could not reach me. The starting fizz of one of the fuses brought me to my senses. Madly tearing myself loose, I leaped to the bottom, plucked out the fuses, drew off the detonators, and then, like a fool, I fainted. The last thing I remembered was the sight of Sam's legs. At the risk of his life, the brave fellow had slid down to my assistance.

Beyond a choice collection of bruises and several unsightly cuts, I was unhurt, and in a few days I was able to resume work again.

Three months of hammer and drill, pick and shovel, dynamite and winch-work, found us at a depth of eighty feet — and still no signs of silver. I must say that during this time we had not lived as cheaply as we might

have done, and, as a result, our funds were once more at an end. Resorting to credit again, we labored on, however, harder than ever, hoping that each shot might reveal the widening seam. Although we knew that such a state of affairs could not last long, we tacitly agreed to borrow no trouble of the future, and went about with faces like those fair apples which, until they are cut into, show no sign of the canker at their heart.

Now, I am naturally a sleepyhead. I never wake early in the morning unless I am roused out. It was therefore quite a surprise to me when, one morning, I awakened without the usual call from Sam. I noticed that the tent was exceedingly hot for such an early hour, and that the flies were uncommonly thick. Instead of getting up, however, or even opening my eyes, I merely lay and sweltered, waiting for Sam's hail. At last the heat and the flies became unbearable, and I sat up. To my astonishment, Sam was not in his stretcher.

"Hello, Sam!" I shouted.

An iguana, looting our provision-box, darted out of the tent at the sound; but there was no answer. I ran outside. Though the sun was well up, no camp-fire had been lighted; and I marveled greatly. Returning to the tent, I looked at my watch and found it was after ten o'clock. For half an hour or so I poked round, wondering what had be-

come of my partner. Of a sudden I remembered that I had not seen his blanket; and as soon as I had assured myself of this fact, the problem was solved. For, in the bush, if a man goes away with only his water-bag, his billy, or his gun, he will come back. If, on the other hand, he takes his blanket, then you may be sure he is gone for good.

Yes, Sam had gone — skipped — vamosed, and I was left to face the music of our creditors.

It was a queer sensation I experienced that morning as I sat in the *mia-mia*, or bough-covered shelter, outside our tent, and ate my solitary breakfast. I felt that the end of the world had come, and that I, the sole survivor, was left to delve forever on that rocky hillside. Out in the sun, the jewel-eyed lizards basked on the hot stones, the leaves of the gums hung straight and motionless, the wide-spread arms of the wind-sail at the shaft were without belly; even the cicalas had ceased their chirping, and all about the camp was still. I never remembered it so still before.

All the morning I wandered aimlessly about the claim, thinking how desolate it looked. At every step I found something to make me sad and lonely. The forge, with its fireless hearth and its array of muddy, unsharpened drills, seemed to be waiting pathetically for the glow of the charcoal and

the sounds of anvil and bellows. The black ants, with the persistence of their kind, were overcoming all the obstacles we had placed before them, and were getting into our water-tank. I reflected, however, that it did not matter; we should not need the water any more. And then the shaft,— that deep, dark pit, in which we had labored so hard and so long,— though the smell of dynamite still lingered to recall our work of yesterday, it had taken on an aspect strangely black and eery. Nothing would have induced me to go below at that time. As I sat on the windlass bar, amusing myself by throwing stones down the shaft, I remembered that, now Sam was gone, this great hole in the ground was all mine. All mine! For the first time that day I laughed. The spell was broken, and I went away chuckling at the ridiculousness of the whole thing.

I consoled myself with the philosophical thought that the main thing for a young man of my limited ability was experience, and that, at least, I was rapidly accumulating. As a miner, I had already tasted the sweet of success and the bitter of failure. Another time, I argued, I should know better than to refuse an offer of any kind. Feeling sorely in need of sympathy, I straightway rolled up my swag and tramped into Silverton, where I poured my woes into the ears of Frank Alcroft. Nor, to be truthful, were his ears the

only ones in which I confided. There were a pair of smaller, pinker ears into which, with far greater satisfaction, I told my disappointment.

I may as well confess at once that for some time I had been enamoured of a very charming and beautiful young lady, whom fortune, or perhaps I should more properly say misfortune, had brought to Silverton. Her father was either lost, stolen, or had strayed somewhere in the interior, and her mother had sought the mining-town with the hope of obtaining a livelihood for her worthy self and family. Aurora — for such was the young lady's dazzling name — was the youngest of three daughters, and, from her mother's account, a model of innocence and filial affection. That she was a practical and capable girl, I had sufficient proof; indeed, it was her able and artistic manner of "doing up" a "boiled" shirt that first attracted me to her. In short, to come to the point without further premise, she was no other than the daughter of my tenant, the washerwoman.

I have endeavored to break this news gently, as I am aware that in the northern hemisphere, owing to the perverse prejudice and moldy conservatism of many, a washerwoman's daughter is apt to be looked down upon. But I do assure you that in Australia things are different. Australia, you must remember, was ever a land of anomalies;

and in a region where white crows and black swans are by no means uncommon, in a country where the bees are without sting, the birds without song, and the flowers without odor, it will surely be a matter of small surprise when I say that this same washerwoman's daughter was one of the belles of Silverton. I cite these things partly to acquit myself of the charge of having formed a plebeian attachment, and partly in confirmation of my previous statement that in Australia things are different.

Aurora, I can assure you, was a maiden of no common type. Blessed with a lithe, sprightly figure, raven-black hair, a clear, white skin, a pair of roguish eyes, and a little, red, kissable mouth, it was no wonder that, in a place where women were rarities, I should have fallen a willing victim to her charms. Added to these visible beauties, however, she had great good nature, a ready wit, and an abundance of common sense. Altogether, she was a girl, in my estimation, capable of behaving gracefully in any station of life.

To Aurora, therefore, I went for consolation, which, with true womanliness, she gave unsparingly; acting at once the parts of mother, sister, and sweetheart, and quickly making me forget my troubles.

I was puzzled greatly meanwhile to know what had become of Sam. Though his reason for abandoning the Silver Crest was

apparent enough, I could not help asking myself why he had left so stealthily, and wondering in which direction he had gone. After diligent inquiry in and about the township, I felt reasonably sure that he had not passed through Silverton; from which I concluded that he had descended to the plains, and taken the road for Adelaide again. For some weeks, moreover, the country at large had been greatly excited over the reported discovery of a new and exceedingly rich gold-field in Western Australia, and I suspected that the Kimberley was Sam's destination.

During the next week my conjectures were confirmed by receiving a letter, written evidently at some sheep-station not far from Silverton. It read as follows:

DEAR JOE:[1] I am sorry I left you so sudden, but I am going round to W. A. and the crest was no good. I should liked to a had you along, but I haint got no right to lead you into this ere life, so I did not say nothing about it and so I hope you will not think too bad of me. Sell up the things on the claim and get a steady job in Silverton. That 's my advice. Your friend,

S. WATSON.

In spite of Sam's good advice, I did not apply for a "steady job"; indeed, so restless was I at that time, that it must needs have been a very tempting offer to have kept me

1 For some unexplainable reason I was christened "Joe" on the passage out to Australia, and the name stuck to me throughout my colonial experience.

in Silverton. The truth of the matter was that I, like my old partner, had caught the gold fever — that I, too, was bent upon trying my luck at the new rush. I was filled already with the gambling spirit that makes the miner, and fascinated with a life in which the element of chance is king. With the wastefulness of youth, I placed no value upon time, but reasoned that in following a miner's life I had nothing to lose and all to gain. I therefore laid my plans for an early departure.

Now the Kimberley district, or the Fitzroy River, where gold was being found, was, roughly speaking, about three thousand miles from Silverton. To reach it, I should first have to make my way back to Adelaide; thence go by water round to Derby; and finally travel five hundred miles inland, over an unknown country, to the "diggings." I must say that I had a very hazy idea of how, without money, I should accomplish this journey. I had before me, however, a living example in Sam. If he could do it, I could.

At this time, by a piece of rare good fortune, I ran across two fellows who were about to sink a shaft within a mile or so of the Crest. As they needed a mining outfit, and I had one to dispose of, we soon came to terms. For a ten-pound note I sold them everything on the claim, and considered myself lucky to get so much. After paying our debts, I had still some four pounds in

hand; and, as I felt that this sum would enable me to reach Adelaide very comfortably, I determined to start on my pilgrimage to the distant gold-fields at once.

As for my "hole-in-the-ground" house, I made over my share in it to Frank Alcroft, with the understanding that the washerwoman and her family were to remain in it for six months, rent free.

On the morrow, however, instead of taking up my bed and walking, as I had planned, I found myself without ambition or power to get out of my blanket; and that same afternoon I was carted off to the hospital — a typhoid patient.

Hospitals on new mining-camps are, as a rule, good places to die in; and the Silverton hospital in those days was no exception. Perched on the top of a hill, about half a mile out of the township, was a rough shed, some forty feet long, in which were stowed the sick, diseased, and maimed of the district. It was covered, like most of the buildings, with galvanized iron, which, together with the tropical sun, turned the interior into a veritable oven. Twice a day the place was visited by a drunken doctor; and the patients, irrespective of numbers, were tended and cooked for while alive, and laid out when dead, by one man and his wife. It will not be hard to understand, therefore, that if a patient got well it was entirely his own fault.

For the first ten days of my illness I knew nothing. After that, however, thanks to a good constitution, I began to mend. One of the first things I remember was the death of a boy occupying the cot next to mine. He was a Dane who had succeeded me in Mr. Port's store, and I knew him well. In the bed opposite me was a man whose throat had been cut by the bursting of a ginger-ale bottle, which he was charging with gas. Next to him lay a groaning wreck, who had fallen down a shaft. Owing to the lack of rain, however, and the prevalence of typhoid, most of the inmates were fever cases. Oh, but it was a ghastly hole in which to lie and wait to get well! Scarcely a day passed without some poor fellow being carried out into the sun for the flies to feast upon, until the burying-cart, with its ready-made coffin, came round. And then the flies that pestered us inside, the heat that radiated from the iron walls, the greasy soup which the attendant's German wife made for us, the dirt, the — but let me stop enumerating; it will not be decent reading.

It was pleasant, though, to be convalescent, and to sit out on the shady side of the building holding Aurora's well-washed hand and listening to her lively chatter. Dear girl! she did much to bring me back to health again. Frank, too, came to see me often, and invariably brought a few specimens of those wizened,

cotton-woolly oranges, which, at a great expense, were carted from the coast. Another friend brought me eggs — eggs which had paid the exorbitant charges of the stage-coach, and which, after their long trip across the plains, always arrived in Silverton half broken and wholly baked. Other friends, in the kindness of their hearts, smuggled in bottles of brandy and whisky; but these the attendant usually discovered, and kept for his own use. At the end of five weeks I was discharged from the hospital, and, thin but hopeful, prepared to start for Kimberley once more.

My unexpected expenses, and the purchase of a few necessaries for the road, had again left me rather short of funds, eighteen shillings being the sum total. Such was my anxiety to get away, however, that I should have gone, had it been necessary, without a penny.

Aurora, silent and red-eyed, escorted me out of the township. We both swore eternal love and many other things; and I promised that, should fortune smile upon me in Westralia, I would come back and ask her to marry me.

"Would you have me, Aurora?" I asked.

"My colonial!" she replied, which, being translated into American slang, means, "Well, I should snicker!"

I thereupon threw down my swag and kissed her.

At the cross-roads we parted. I left Aurora weeping, and, heavy of foot and heart, went up over the hill with bluey high on my shoulders. At the top of the ridge I halted and looked back. Aurora's trim white figure was easily discernible on the broad red road below. Loosing the handkerchief at my neck, I spread it flagwise to the breeze; but either she could not see the signal, or did not turn, for I saw no answering pennant. I watched her until she reached the town, where she soon disappeared among the buildings; and that was the last I saw of my love of "sunny New South Wales."

Possessed of a desire to take a farewell view of the Silver Crest, I left the main road for the rocky track we had opened up to the claim. I soon saw that I was not alone. Following me closely was a graceful kangaroo-hound, as handsome a specimen of the breed as I ever remember having seen. At first my efforts to drive him back were honest. I assiduously pelted him with stones, and, with pointed finger and a stern voice, bade him return to his master. Later, however, my ardor abated. I watched him furtively following me afar off, and debated on the legality of taking a dog which, for very good reasons, no doubt, refused to go home. I called him up to me, patted him on the head, and talked to him sensibly. I told him that he would be a fool to come with me, that I

was probably going to walk all the way to Adelaide, and that water and food were likely to be pretty scarce. To all of which he replied plainly that he did not care twopence for the inconvenience of the road; all he wanted was my company. At this I simply washed my hands of all responsibility, and walked on, the dog, meanwhile, bounding joyfully ahead.

Most desolate and dreary the claim appeared as I rested on the gray hillside and looked for the last time on the scene of my first mining experience. Except for the wide slit at the summit of the little hill, and the mass of new broken rock about its base, the Silver Crest had reverted to its original wildness, and showed no signs of the bustling camp that once enlivened its barren solitude. After a few minutes' musing and dreaming over what might have been, I shouldered my swag, and made my way downward to the plain.

A few miles farther on I stopped for dinner; that is, I lighted a fire, boiled a billy of tea, and ate a part of the bread and meat I had brought in my pocket. Then I went on again, hoping to reach the shanty at the South Australian border that night. Long before sundown, however, what with the heat, the weight of my swag, and the strain of wearing a new pair of boots, I was forced to camp, after making only fourteen miles. That night I and the dog, whom I christened

"Prince," curled up under the imaginary shelter of a wire fence, where, with the stars for our canopy and old mother earth for our mattress, we forgot our discomforts in slumber.

Although on the road down I played the part of sundowner with some success, yet, in spite of my resolve not to waste any money, I found my small store of cash rapidly vanishing. In vain I tried to keep sufficient to pay my railroad-fare from Terowie to Adelaide. The very fact of having a few shillings in my pocket made me foolishly independent, and kept me constantly anxious to spend them. Toward the last I grew rashly extravagant, drinking a glass of sheoak at each pub I passed, and in two instances actually paying for my meals.

Another fortnight of lonely tramping over the vast miraged plains, another spell of monotonous bush desolation, of yellow-tufted grass, of stony desert, of red-clay pan, of leg-wearying tracts of sand, and at last we reached Terowie. After our two-hundred-mile walk, both Prince and I were exceedingly thin, and looked much the worse for wear.

Loath to continue my journey afoot, I took to cutting wood at the railway hotel for my meals, hoping that something would turn up. Help came after a few days from quite an unexpected quarter. A party bound for the northward took a fancy to Prince, and I even-

tually sold him to them for the sum of sixteen shillings. Poor dog! he looked so forlorn and reproachful when I left him tied to the tail-end of the stranger's buckboard, that I went away feeling strangely guilty. And yet I knew I could not have taken him with me.

Without loss of time I bought a ticket, took the next train to Adelaide, and arrived at that city about six o'clock in the evening. The unlooked-for lift in my journey had put me in the highest spirits, the future looked more promising, and, now that I was near salt water again, I felt a renewal of confidence in myself.

And the city! After my sojourn in the bush what a wonderful place it seemed!—so big, so bright, so full of life and laughter and pretty women, that I was intoxicated with it all. Like a country boy upon his first visit to the town, I walked the brilliant streets, looked into the shop-windows, and enjoyed the crowds with a delight truly childish.

In the course of my wanderings, I found myself outside the Theater Royal, where large posters announced that the "Crimes of Paris" was to be played that night. A stream of merry pleasure-seekers was then pouring in at the open doors. Involuntarily my hand sought my pocket, and I drew forth my remaining capital—just one shilling and sixpence. The cheapest seat in the house was a shilling. Should I go? I hesitated, and

from that moment was lost. Almost before I realized it, I had passed the ticket-office, and was seated among the "larrikins" (toughs) in the gallery, watching with eager interest the rising curtain. As I look back upon it now, the "Crimes of Paris" is a play red with gore and sonorous with thunder. Yet it thrilled and fascinated me that night in a way that no other play has ever done, and I have still a distinct recollection of its lurid scenes and characters. After it was over — after the lovers were united, and the villain done for in the orthodox manner — I went out into the cool night air, and started briskly off for the stable in which I had left my swag, tingling with pleasurable sensations. For such joys to the poor are joys indeed; not stale or insipid by reason of satiety, but hard-earned and heightened by infrequency.

As a heavy dew was falling, I courted Morpheus that night under the friendly shelter of a market-wagon, where, notwithstanding the stony, undulating nature of my couch, I slept most soundly.

V

PORT ADELAIDE

AT sun-up next morning I arose; and, having washed at the pump in the stable yard, and coaxed the cook of a near-by eating-house to give me some breakfast, I parted with my last sixpence to take train to Port Adelaide. From here my sanguine nature led me to believe that a passage to West Australia, either by coasting-steamer or sailing-vessel, would be an easy thing to obtain. As a sailor, I felt sure I should have no trouble in working my way round. Should this not be practicable, I was prepared to ship as cook, steward, or in any other capacity, and, in the event of all these things failing, I made up my mind to "stow away."

As I had been in Port Adelaide many times before, there were several sailors' resorts in which I was known. Taking advantage of this, on my arrival at the seaport I made straightway for a dockside hotel, called the Queen's Arms, and there put up. Having

previously spent much money in this house, and being looked upon as a traveler bound for the west, I was, in spite of my bush rig, welcomed as an old guest, and treated as one whose financial condition was unquestioned.

Pray do not think that I deliberately took up my abode at the Queen's Arms with the idea of leaving behind me an unpaid bill. Nothing, I can assure you, was further from my thoughts. I was merely gambling on the hope I had of getting a ship and receiving the usual wages in advance — a hope which I felt very certain would be fulfilled.

Imagine my surprise, then, when, upon looking round, I found the port literally overflowing with men in the same predicament as myself, and all anxious to get to the same place. Under the influence of the magic words "gold rush," the roving army of miners had, with one accord, turned their faces toward the "new find"; and many farmers, stockmen, shearers, and tradesmen had dropped their tools to do likewise. The unemployed, too, had turned out in great force; it seemed as though every sundowner and vagabond in the colony had made his way to this last port of call. So great, indeed, was the number of these impecunious gold-seekers that the local government had instituted the building of a sea-wall, in order that all who would might have employment and the means to live. I found that all vessels, not only

those chartered for Derby, but those bound to any port in West Australia, had secured all the hands they needed at earlier ports, and that stowaways were most diligently searched for before leaving harbor. At first I would not believe it, and spent several days vainly hanging about the steamboat wharves, importuning chief stewards, engineers, and captains. At the end of a week, however, I began to see that my chances of reaching Kimberley and of paying my hotel bill were equally slender.

Though this somewhat staggered me, I soon rallied, and tried to think my way out of the situation. Ensconced in an easy-chair in the hotel smoking-room, with an unpaid-for cigar in my mouth, and my hands deep in my empty pockets, I lay back and pondered over the scrape I was in. Here I was, enjoying unusually good fortune, having plenty to eat, enough to drink, and a good bed to lie on, and, instead of appreciating it, I was forever harassed by the question, How is it to be paid for? That large and ever-growing hotel bill hung over my head like the sword of Damocles. Every time I entered the dining-room I felt like a thief, the politeness of the waiters embarrassed me, and, if by chance or courtesy the proprietor addressed me, I felt sure that he could see into my pockets. In gloomy meditation I sat for hours trying to invent some scheme of evading the awful

disclosure which I felt must sooner or later come. But my wits refused to work, and I went to bed feeling very miserable, thinking how much happier Prince and I had been, sleeping in the wagon-ruts on the road down from Silverton, where, though water was scarce, the food poor, and chambermaids were not, at least we had clear consciences.

I awakened the next morning with an idea — one that, strange to say, had not occurred to me before. I had remembered that I possessed a watch, upon which I was reasonably sure I could raise enough money to leave the Queen's Arms without dishonor. It was an old gold timepiece — an heirloom — that had been handed down to me many years before, and, much as I disliked parting with it, I concluded that it was the right and only thing to be done. After polishing up the case, therefore, with some whiting that I begged from the kitchen-maid, I made my way, not without some trepidation, to a pawnshop, where I was granted a loan of thirty shillings upon the watch.

With a light heart I returned to my hotel and called for the proprietor. After explaining my reasons for leaving, I asked for my account, and promptly paid over the whole of the money I had received for the watch. When I was about to gather up my few belongings, mine host, partly from pity, and partly, perhaps, because he found some ele-

ments of honesty in me, said that, if I liked, I might stay and work for him.

He said he was constantly in want of a man to do odd jobs about the place, and that, if I would put in five or six hours' work a day, he would, in return, find me in beer, tobacco, and food. His proposal, I assured him, would suit me capitally. It seemed indeed quite an ideal arrangement, inasmuch as I should be free for some time each day to lie in wait for an opportunity to get round to the gold-fields.

That day I was started at the respectable work of building a hen-coop. Later, I was set the task of rigging and painting a flag-pole. From these things I descended, by degrees, to shelling pease for Sunday's dinner, cleaning the "guests'" boots, and taking care of the landlady's baby. Finally, in the rush of Saturday night's business, I was inveigled into the bar-room, to wash glasses and deliver sundry pots of liquor to the guzzling seamen who frequented the place.

Now, all of these occupations, even that of pot-boy, I could have stood uncomplainingly, had it been anywhere else but in Port Adelaide. As there, however, I was not only known by several persons, but was frequently meeting shipmates who had seen me in better circumstances, the pot-slinging business was very humbling. The thing that hurt me more than anything else, though, was the changed

attitude of the barmaid since my fall. She who had smiled so sweetly upon me as a guest, who had prinked and beribboned her pretty self for my especial benefit, who had accepted my attentions, and once, blushingly, allowed me to place my arm about her waist and kiss her,—she, I say, who had even given me her photograph, now elevated her little nose, and passed me over with supreme disdain. Time was when Grace would never have let me see her in curl-papers, but, alas! those days had gone; I might see her any morning in the beastly things, without the least concern on her part. The veriest loafer, raising, with shaking hand, the glass of spirits to his lips, got more smiles than I. Soon she took to calling me by my Christian name, in a most unflattering way, and curtly ordering me about. It was bad enough to be obliged to humiliate myself, but this was surely drinking the cup of humiliation to the dregs. At last it came to such a pitch that I revolted, strapped up my swag, and left.

My next move was to the Sailors' Home. This, as you doubtless know, is a charitable institution, to be found in most of the large seaports of the world. Its object is to keep sailors from falling into the unscrupulous hands of the boarding-house masters or crimps, and to provide them with clean, comfortable quarters, at reasonable rates, while in port. If a seaman has no money, the Home will

take him in until he finds a ship, payment for board and lodging being deducted from his advance money.

Upon applying to the superintendent of the Home, he informed me that he would take me in, on condition that I accepted the first chance of shipping. Though I agreed to this stipulation with apparent willingness, I must admit that I had no intention of being shipped off to Hong Kong or round the "Horn." My destination was Westralia, and to Westralia I would go, and nowhere else. For I had still a hope that I should find some kind of a billet aboard a coaster bound in that direction.

The second day after my arrival, a crew was wanted to ship for San Francisco. As soon as I heard the news, I feigned sickness, and thus escaped being sent to the eastward. Then, for two weeks, no calls were made upon the institution, and, in the meantime, I boarded everything that floated into the harbor,—ships, barks, schooners, colliers, tugboats, and "hookers" of every nation,—all, however, without accomplishing the result I desired.

An unexpected piece of good fortune now came in the shape of a post-office order from Frank Alcroft for two pounds. How the poor fellow ever got such a sum will always be a mystery to me, for he was the sole support of his mother and two sisters, who lived in London and wrote complaining letters about

the amount of money he sent them. In the brotherly note I received from Frank he said he knew I should be in need of funds, and that he sent the little he could scrape together in part payment of the debt he owed me on the house; from which I perceived that I had made at least one honorable and loyal friend in Silverton. With my new capital I made haste to redeem my watch, and you may be sure I was very glad to get the old "ticker" back again.

A day or two later, I found among the advertisements of the daily paper the following:

Wanted — An experienced man to take charge of prize sheep, bound the bark *Day Dawn* to Geraldton, W. A. Apply in person at 18 King Street, between the hours of 10 and 12 A. M.

No sooner had I read this than I made a bolt for the street, and, girding up my loins, ran with all speed to the address given. Here, thought I, was an opportunity of getting more than half-way round to Derby, and being paid for it. What luck it would be if I could only secure the job! As I ran, my mind was inflamed by the gloriousness of the prospect.

When I reached 18 King Street, however, the sight of some fifty or sixty men, all eager to take charge of the sheep, sadly dashed my hopes; for I realized how poor a chance I

stood of being chosen out of so many competent men, some of whom fairly *smelled* of sheep. As for me, I knew as much about a sheep as a sheep knew about me. I got into line, however, and, in due course of time, stood before Mr. Angus, the employer, who was reputed to be at once the largest sheep-breeder and the richest man in all Australia.

"Well, young fellow, what do you know about sheep?" was his salutation.

"I 've been acquainted with them all my life, sir," was my modest reply. And so I had — in the shape of mutton.

"You have, eh?" he said, looking me over sharply with his shrewd gray eyes. "What stations — sheep-farms — have you been on?"

I mentioned several that I had walked through on my way down from Silverton.

"Seems to me you have changed about a good deal," he remarked.

I admitted that I was of a roving disposition.

He then launched out upon the business on hand, and talked at some length about the requirements necessary for a man who should undertake the contract. All of which I listened to and seconded with much deference. And, having got my cue and the old gentleman's ear, I summoned all the tact at my command, and endeavored to persuade him that I was the most suitable man for the position; pointing out to him, with artful em-

phasis, that not only had I a perfect knowledge of sheep, but that I also had the advantage of being a seaman, which, as it rendered me proof against sea-sickness, made me doubly fitted to care for them. This theory, I am happy to say, found lodgment in Mr. Angus's brain, and, notwithstanding my youth, which he said was against me, I was rewarded with the prize.

The contract which I was required to sign before going aboard appeared to my inexperienced eyes a generous and equitable agreement. Provided I made a successful trip and landed the cargo of sheep intact, I was to receive the noble sum of twenty pounds. There was, to be sure, a saving clause, to the effect that if any of the animals died, five shillings were to be deducted for each one. This paragraph, I was informed, however, was merely put in to insure proper care of the sheep. Needless to say, I signed the contract willingly enough. I would, indeed, have signed anything in those days.

The day of departure having been decided upon, I received my instructions, and left Mr. Angus's office in the highest possible feather, feeling much elated at my success and the certainty of leaving Port Adelaide. The prevailing winds at that season of the year being in our favor, the trip was estimated to take from twelve to fifteen days. In my imagination I had already landed in Geraldton, and,

with a nice little pay-day, was waiting for the next steamer bound for the Kimberley.

In the midst of my exultation I thought of the Sailors' Home. For the time being I had forgotten all about it, and now it struck me with crushing force that unless I paid my board I could not leave. The fact that I was at liberty to come and go at will I appreciated — but my clothes! Though they consisted of only one change and a blanket, they constituted the whole of my worldly possessions, and no earthly power could induce me to go without them. Thinking that perhaps my new employer might advance me sufficient to pay my score at the Home, I visited him the next morning. The canny old Scot, however, was not to be coaxed. He would give me a pound of tobacco and some matches, he told me, before the vessel left, but beyond that he would do nothing.

There were, then, three courses open to me: either I must pay and leave, stay and be shipped to an undesirable port, or bolt. To pay, I concluded, was entirely out of the question, and stay I would not, so there was nothing left for me but to make the charitable institution do one more act of charity than it anticipated.

Every night a watchman paced up and down in front of the building, whose duty it was to prevent these enforced acts of charity; and he was my one obstacle. But it is said

that there is a weak spot in every one's armor, and this stalwart German was no exception. Whether his weak spot was his heart or his stomach was a question I never could decide upon. Indications pointed equally to both of these organs. As, unlike most men, he was not able to call upon his sweetheart in the evening, she was in the habit of visiting him. When she arrived upon the scene, the pair were wont to cross the street to indulge probably in those sweet nothings which are so much better without the aid of a flaring gas-jet. That there was something more substantial than this, however, I judged from the fact that he invariably picked his teeth with a pen-knife when he returned, and then lighted up his pipe. Bearing these things in mind, on the eve of the sailing of the *Day Dawn* I watched from an upper window, more ardently than I think my enemy the watchman did for the coming of his lady-love. True to her tryst, about nine o'clock the maiden appeared, and, after a short conversation, led the way across the wide street, he following a few moments later.

This was my signal for action. Rushing to my room, which luckily looked out upon a side-street, I locked the door, and softly opened the window. Two men were standing on the corner talking, at sight of whom I swore. A full five minutes I waited in a fever of impatience. Would they never

go? My great fear was that the watchman would come back. At length I heard a welcome "S' long, old man, s' long," and saw them start in different directions. As soon as their steps had died away, I took a final survey and, finding all quiet, cautiously dropped my swag. Then I walked quickly, though with apparent calmness, down the stairs, lingered a minute to ask the superintendent what were the chances of getting an early ship, sauntered with studied slowness out into the street, picked up my bundle, and ran — aye, as if the devil himself were after me. For a guilty conscience, although it makes a heavy heart, lends lightness to the heels, and I have no doubt that I was alongside the *Day Dawn* before the watchman had ended his love-feast.

"Hello, there! Who are you?" growled the ship-keeper, as I clambered over the old bark's rail.

"I 'm the man in charge of the sheep," I explained, breathlessly.

He peered at me suspiciously, evidently in doubt, from my youthful appearance and winded condition, whether I might not be some audacious stowaway. "What 's your name?" he asked.

My answer seeming to satisfy him, he became more gracious, and showed me at once to my berth in the little, stuffy cabin. Feeling secure, now that I had a safe place to

deposit my swag, I soon ascended the companionway to the deck again. During the day three hundred pure-bred merino rams had been put aboard, also twenty pigs of prize stock, and twelve peacocks. These, together with a large stock of provender for their use, were the sole cargo of the vessel. As I leaned over the main hatch, a strong, warm smell of sheep ascended into my nostrils, and I could hear the munching of the animals in the black hold below.

After half an hour or so, being assured that my escape had not been seen, I went boldly back to the Sailors' Home, and there wrote a letter to the superintendent, frankly explaining my situation. Among other things, I told him that, although my employer would not give me any advance money, I was to be well paid for the trip, and that if he would send me a bill, I would return him the amount I owed, from Geraldton. I then inclosed the few shillings left in my pockets, and placed the package upon the bed in my room, where I knew it would not be found until the following morning. Having thus appeased my conscientious scruples, I made my way to the ship again, and "turned in."

VI

THE VOYAGE OF THE "DAY DAWN"

OH that I had foreseen the experiences I was to undergo during the next few weeks! For then I would rather have been shipped round the Horn, or

> Up into the Arctic in a suit of dungaree,

a dozen times, than to have tempted fate in the *Day Dawn*.

Before I had been asleep an hour, I was called to attend a pig that had fallen in a fit. With the help of the ship-keeper, I managed to haul the brute into a pen by himself, where I allowed him to kick himself out of his fit. Even at this early stage in the passage, my struggles with the animals had begun.

The tramping of feet overhead and the weird cries of the sailors awakened me at daybreak next morning. From the rippling sound of water against the vessel's side, I knew that we were already being towed down

the river. Not having put in a very good night's rest, mainly on account of the pig episode, I was in no hurry to get up, but lay contentedly musing over my good luck in overcoming obstacles and in being able to make such a big stride toward the gold country.

"Let go your starboard, foretops' clew-line on deck there!" came in stentorian tones from the topmast-head. "All gone!" was the response. They were making sail. It was evident that we were nearing the mouth of the creek, and as I wished to take a farewell look at Port Adelaide, I tumbled out and began to dress.

"Sheet home!" was the next cry. There came a rattling of chains from aloft, the singing out of men on deck, then from the mate a loud "Belay!"

Shortly afterward I heard the skipper bellow: "All hands on the tops'l-halyards!" and then come pattering down the cabin steps. A moment later the door of my state-room was kicked violently open, and I found myself face to face with the gentleman himself.

Captain Davy was by no means a prepossessing man. He was a short, knotty, white-eyebrowed creature, with a straggly red beard, and a face speckled with great brown spots, like the eggs of a moor-hen. There was an inflamed look about his eyelids and nose that suggested frequent potations; also

a crooked set to his mouth, caused by a scar that ran down his right cheek into his upper lip. As he stood at my door, with his head thrust forward and a villainous scowl upon his face, I saw that I had to contend with what is known at sea as a "bucko."

"What in —— are you skulking down here for, you —— sheep-farmer?" he began. "Get up on deck there, and lend a hand with those tops'l-halyards!"

He undoubtedly took me for an up-country station-hand, and, I suppose, intended to have some fun bullying me during the voyage.

For a moment the old habit, which I had learned at sea, of obeying under all circumstances, kept my tongue still. The epithet of "sheep-farmer" stung, however, and then quickly came a revulsion of feeling in which the injustice of his treatment was uppermost.

"Look here, captain," said I; "if you think I 'm going to take my orders from you or anybody else aboard this packet, you 're mistaken. I shipped as a representative of Mr. Angus, and before I lay hands on a rope, I 'll see you and your old tub in ——"

"Oh, that 's your talk, is it? You 're one of these fly blokes, ain't you?" he snarled sarcastically.

"Fly enough for you, Captain Davy," I replied, looking him squarely in the eye, and assuming a confident manner.

He took this as a challenge; for I saw the

scar on his face grow purple and his eyes grow small. A rough-and-tumble seemed imminent, and as I had no desire for a fight at the moment, I suddenly slammed the door in his face, and shot the bolt.

Through the partition I heard a running fire of lurid oaths. Then he moved away, shouting, as a final shot, "I 'll take it out of you before we get to Geraldton."

"It will take a better man than you," I retorted in school-boy fashion.

When I went on deck, a little later, I found him at the wheel, all hands being busy setting sail. We glared at one another, but did not speak. A feud had been established between us, which, though it promised to make things rather lively for me on the voyage, was not calculated to add to my comfort.

To aid me in the care of our living cargo, there had been shipped two other experienced sheepmen, whose sole duty was to feed, water, and tend the animals. Fortunately for all concerned, they really did know something about sheep, and I am bound to say that, if Mr. Angus had any reason for congratulation at the end of our voyage,— which is doubtful,— it was entirely due to my small crew.

These men, I saw, had already been pressed into the service of the ship, and were then engaged about the decks. I discovered afterward that Captain Davy, on the supposition that he would get us to help work the vessel,

had engaged two hands less than his usual complement. Although I was inwardly boiling at this appropriation of my men, I thought it wiser to make no objection at the time. Later, when I got Bill and Bob below, I warned them, upon pain of having their wages "docked," not to obey any orders but mine. And, as it was to their interest to be on my side, we formed a triple alliance against the remainder of the ship.

By the time the tugboat had brought us to the bar, the patched and ill-cut canvas of the *Day Dawn* was all set, and, with a fair wind, we were soon booming down the bay toward the open sea. Before nightfall Kangaroo Island was a dim outline in our wake.

The *Day Dawn* was a bluff-bowed, square-sterned old bark, that had been in the coasting-trade "since Adam was a boy," as one of the forecastlemen said. The many diverse coats of paint with which she had been slathered during her long life had now become a general tone of warm gray, though there were still patches of yellow about her stern and pink at her forefoot to remind one that she had had her day. Her masts, spars, and rigging were all of the same weather gray. For want of paint, scraping, and proper care, she looked, indeed, like one of those sun-bleached specters that dot the coasts of all Australia. Although, in any sort of a breeze, her timbers sighed and groaned, and gave out

little squeaks, like an old lady with the rheumatics, yet, notwithstanding all this, she kept a remarkably dry deck in all weathers, and was an excellent sea-boat.

The officers of the *Day Dawn* consisted of two mates. The chief was a big, blond man from the north of England, by the name of Somers. A strangely silent fellow was Somers, who, beyond giving orders, seldom ventured anything but "Aye." At table, in the cabin, the captain talked continually, while the mate kept up a variously intoned commentary of "Ayes." Sometimes his "Aye" was a question, sometimes an exclamation, and at others it was a word of assent, or meant "I think so." Again, it expressed doubt. In fact, with this one word of his, he said everything. I never knew a man with so small a vocabulary. From reasons of policy, doubtless, he looked upon me with a cold eye; and we never were friendly. Harvey, the second mate, on the other hand, was a gay young blade, from the "Sydney side." He talked volubly, with a decided cockney accent, and, as he hated the skipper, he and I became very chummy.

Besides the "afterguard" there were six men forward and a Chinese cook.

The first few days after we had left Adelaide we had favoring winds and fine weather. The rams, pigs, and peacocks gave us no trouble whatever. They ate and drank

freely, seemed kindly disposed and well content. I had one little argument with the captain, in the meantime, about working Bill and Bob, in which I came off victorious. Otherwise all was fair sailing.

In spite of the propitious skies, the good seamanship of the ship, and other hopeful circumstances, Captain Davy and I remained implacable enemies. At meals we sat and looked over one another's heads, we walked on different sides of the poop, and never spoke except to quarrel. His hatred of me was increased since I had told him that if he did not stop interfering with my men, and show proper consideration for the cargo, I would report him upon our arrival at Geraldton, and do my best to curtail his freight-money. Although this threat cowed him somewhat, I felt he was only waiting to be revenged.

Nearing the Leeuwin,— that stormy cape where it always seems to blow,— we were met by a strong head wind, which finally settled into a whole gale from the westward.

This was the beginning of trouble.

No sooner had the bad weather struck us, and the ballasted vessel begun to "chuck" and "send" and dive, and lie over on her beam-ends, than the entire crew of rams mutinied. The pigs did not seem to mind it a bit; neither were the peacocks, though drenched and bedraggled, very disconsolate. It was only the sheep, and they were not to

be comforted. Not only did they refuse to eat, and refrain from drinking, but all our efforts to induce or coax them to do so were met with that determined and peculiar resistance of which only the curly-horned merino ram is capable. Obstinacy, up to this time, I had ascribed to other animals. I am now convinced, however, that for idiotic and sullen stubbornness the merino ram is preëminent.

Lack of food and pure air,—for we could not keep the hatches off,—cramped quarters, and the violent lurching of the vessel, soon began to tell upon them. For the most part the poor creatures stood with their heads down, swaying dismally with the motion of the ship, every now and then being thrown in a heap against the lee side of their pens. It was painful to watch them. We made their partitions smaller, strewed bale after bale of straw under their feet, and worked day and night to relieve their sufferings—all, however, without much avail. Since they would neither eat nor drink of their own accord, we were obliged to give them nourishment by force; and this we accomplished by bestriding their backs, pulling back their heads, and pouring a mixture of meal and water down their throats. This dose we administered, by means of large soda-water bottles, twice a day, and, I can assure you, it was no sinecure to tend three hundred of such patients. In return for our kindness, they

reciprocated by butting us with great gusto, until it became necessary to shingle our legs for protection. Nothing but the small size of the pens kept us from being pulverized.

On the third morning of the storm, I was horrified to find one of the rams dead. This appealed to me particularly, as I saw five shillings deducted from the goodly pay-day I had in prospect. I redoubled my exertions to keep them alive, increasing the dose of meal and water to three times a day. But all our care, watching, and nursing seemed to have no effect. They "died on us," first by twos and threes, and then by dozens. Before the storm was over, I became an expert at skinning sheep.

Throughout the stormy weather, the captain and I had frequent rows. Although the old bark, strained by the stress of weather and his carrying on, leaked like a sieve, he had no compunction for his crew, who were at the pumps half the time, and no mercy for the unfortunate animals below. Primed with constant "nips" from the rum-cask, he spent the greater part of each twenty-four hours standing at the top of the cabin steps, where he hummed "Annie Laurie," and occasionally barked out an order. Instead of carrying only sufficient sail on the *Day Dawn* to steady her, he crowded on every inch of canvas she could stagger under, and most of the time kept her half buried.

In the face of the sheep dying daily, and the constant diminishing of my pay, this foolish "driving" made me furious. Captain Davy in his cups, however, was provokingly good-natured, and when I would demand that he should take the maintopgallantsail off her, or stow the foresail, he would laugh at me and ask sarcastically if he were running the ship, or I. In vain I threatened, argued, and even begged him to be reasonable: he only drove her all the harder.

Although I had soothed my troublesome conscience in regard to leaving the Sailors' Home by writing to the superintendent, and assuring myself that the institution was a charitable one, and meant to help just such unfortunates as I, I could not help feeling, during our stormy passage, and the ill luck attending it, that I was the Jonah. The old sailor's superstition that the wrath of the elements will surely follow those who leave their washerwoman's, bootmaker's, and other bills unpaid, kept cropping up in my mind, and I would gladly have sung "We 'll Pay Paddy Doyle for his Boots," or any other chantey, had I thought it would appease the Storm Fiend's anger. These thoughts, however, I wisely kept to myself.

The gale at last subsided, to be followed by the usual development, a calm. For a time we rested from our labors; the sheep began to eat again, and no more died. The

blow, however, had wrought sad havoc with our charges. They were now nothing but a lot of spindle-shanked, wool-covered anatomies, and in numbers they had decreased by half—a fearful subtraction indeed! As for me, unless I could induce the agent to make some allowances for the unusual severity of the voyage, I knew that I had nothing but hard words to expect at Geraldton.

With the return of fine weather, the captain stopped drinking, and again became disagreeable. The animus which we had both been harboring so long grew in intensity every day, and I am sure it was only my avoidance of him that saved me from open and bloody warfare. Three days before we reached Geraldton, however, our accumulated bad blood came to a head.

We had run smoothly up the coast a little beyond Perth, when we were again entertained by a calm. The weather being exceedingly hot, and the cabin almost unbearable, I took my blanket on deck one night and camped on the after-house, which rose about four feet above the poop-deck. It was a beautiful moonlight night, clear as a bell, with the sea flat and motionless. Save for the cluck of the rudder and the flap and swish of idle canvas, all was still. Lying down under the draft of the spanker, I told Somers, who had the deck, to call me if a breeze came up, received the inevitable "Aye" for answer, and went to sleep.

About eight bells, I was awakened by some one calling my name. Taught by sea-discipline to jump at the first call, I bounded to my feet, and seeing a figure standing in the narrow passageway between the house and the poop rail, I stepped down, and found myself confronting the captain. In a dazed, drowsy fashion, I heard him say something about sleeping on deck, and then, without the slightest warning, I received a stiff punch in the eye, and immediately measured my length on the deck. No sooner was I down than he sprang upon me like a cat, and, kneeling upon my chest, proceeded savagely to thump me. Twice did I feel his horny knuckles in the same unfortunate eye. This sort of thing soon took the sleep out of me, though, strange to say, I was not yet roused to anger. As I lay there, however, doing my best to ward off his vicious blows, it occurred to me that it was a very cowardly thing to hit a man when he was down. This courtesy of the prize-ring I had learned when a school-boy. The more I thought of the cowardliness of his attack the more incensed I became, until, at last, I placed my bare feet against his chest and threw him from me. We both stood on our legs at the same moment, and I managed to get in a good, lifting upper cut on his chin, which, as he was close to the low rail, toppled him overboard.

Down into the black water he went, with an amazing splash of phosphorescence, but

soon came to the surface swearing in three languages. The second mate, who was then on watch, threw several lines over the side, and as the vessel had no way on, the skipper scrambled on board again. By this time all hands had turned out to see the fun, and, from the stray comments that reached me, I was glad to note that the general feeling was in my favor. As his head appeared over the rail, I heard Bill say, "Sock it to 'im!"

I waited until he was fairly on deck, and then I took Bill's advice. The captain so far had been doing all the work, and was, moreover, a trifle water-logged after his bath. For a time, therefore, I had no difficulty in keeping him off and hitting him wherever and whenever I pleased. Although I was the better boxer of the two, he had an infinite capacity for taking punishment. Altogether, we were pretty evenly matched.

Quick to see that at a distance I had the advantage, he closed and very cleverly tripped me. Fortunately for me, I did not fall as he had intended, or the fight would have ended then and there. Instead of this, we fell sidewise, and went rolling over and over on the moonlit deck, each trying to get the upper hand. Then we rose again and went struggling from one side of the ship to the other, he getting the best of it at one time and I at another.

It must have been a strange scene, that midnight fight of ours on the *Day Dawn's*

wave-worn planking. I wonder what the horned rams thought of the thumping overhead at that hour. During the whole of the long battle neither of us spoke a word; nor did the onlookers say anything. It was a grim, silent fray, through which a listener would have heard nothing but our heavy breathing, a series of eloquent grunts, and the occasional crack of a hard fist striking against an equally hard head.

Gradually we grew weaker and weaker, and more blown. Though we still embraced as fondly as ever, our grip was not so tenacious; we wobbled limply about the quarter-deck, and were of one accord as to breathing-spells. Our blows at last fell harmlessly, and still holding on to each other, we sank into the scupper thoroughly exhausted.

Even in this plight, I feel sure that neither of us would have given in, had not Somers, the mate, now interfered. Thinking, I suppose, that we had had enough of it, he dragged us roughly apart, and, while Bill and Bob attended to me, he led the captain aft.

Such was the end of the longest, fiercest, and most notable fight of my life.

For half a pound of tobacco, I engaged the Chinaman to bathe my eye during the remainder of the night, not so much because I minded the pain, as for the reason that I wished to present an unscathed face in the morning. I regret exceedingly to say, how-

ever, that when the sun got up my features were swollen almost beyond recognition. This humbled me greatly, and I found no consolation until I had caught a glimpse of the skipper's face, which, even at this date I remember with much satisfaction, looked fully as hideous as my own. For we never forgave one another. Neither of us having conquered, we still nursed our venom, and showed our mutual hatred on every possible occasion.

After a passage of thirty-five days, we finally reached the port of Geraldton. It is a small town, some three hundred miles to the northward of Perth, the capital, and it serves as the outlet for the various products of the surrounding country, principally wool and horses. Geraldton, like Sydney, Perth, and other Australian cities, was originally a penal settlement. Unlike these its more prosperous fellows, however, Geraldton seems to have been lacking in something; for it is still rather primitive, and, comparatively speaking, unknown. From the bay the sight of the little town is a very pleasant one, and, after such a voyage as ours, the white-verandaed houses, the bright verdure, and the yellow strand looked particularly inviting. The town runs along the foot of a low coast range, and two lighthouses, like gigantic sentinels on guard, stand at the two ends of the harbor. A dangerous reef run-

ning far out to sea forms a natural breakwater, upon which the swell of the Indian Ocean breaks incessantly with a dull roar. On the calmest day the reef may be traced by the foaming breakers that strike this rocky barrier and shoot high in the air in their efforts to overcome it, only to break into myriad sparkling atoms and fall back baffled.

When, at last, our anchor went rattling from the hawse-pipe to its resting-place in the blue waters of the bay, I found that we had lost one hundred and fifty rams and two pigs, and that the sailors had plucked every feather out of the peacocks' tails.

As soon as a boat could be lowered, the captain and I — then in the height of the black-and-blue stage — were pulled off to the jetty. Upon landing we made our way up the straggling main street, with its scanty array of buildings and deserted appearance, until we arrived at the agent's store. Here, in due season, I put in some special pleading. I enlarged upon the stormy weather we had encountered, the length of the passage, the faithful attention we had given the animals, and so forth, and said that although, according to the agreement, I was not entitled to anything, I hoped some allowance would be made for these unfortunate acts of God.

To my chagrin, however, I found that I must abide by my contract. The agent informed me, in the most gentlemanly manner,

that he was merely Mr. Angus's representative, and without his consent could do nothing for me. Whereupon I shook the dust of that office from off my feet, and went out into the street swearing.

Slipping the straps of my swag over my shoulders, I started up the road in search of I knew not what; abusing the *Day Dawn* and her rammy cargo at one moment, and laughing at my strange situation the next. To judge from the way the townspeople stared at me as I strolled along looking for employment, it was evident that strangers in Geraldton were curiosities. I walked on until I came to the north lighthouse. As this appeared to be the end of civilization in that direction, nothing but a winding track into the bush being visible, I turned about. Retracing my steps, it was not long before I stood in the shadow of the south lighthouse, with only the sea beyond.

"And this is Geraldton!" thought I, as, seating myself upon a convenient rock, I took in the landscape. "Two lighthouses, one street, one bay with one ship in it, one stranger, and one hundred and fifty horned rams. D—— them!"

VII

TOWARD THE GOLD-FIELDS

LEST it be thought that my misfortunes and penniless condition weighed heavily upon me, I would here record that throughout my life I was never more light of heart, more free from care, more genuinely happy, than at this very time, when the world's rough hand was knocking the boy into the shape of a man. There were times, to be sure, when I was cast down; there were periods of homesickness, moments of bitter disappointment; but these downs in my experience were always of short duration, and, by comparison, the ups became doubly joyous. As a rubber ball, when struck, receives a dent and then regains its spheric shape, so did I, with youthful buoyancy, soon recover from these blows of circumstance. It was all, indeed, one grand adventure, crammed with interest, the charm of novelty, and real life.

I must admit that Geraldton, with its sleepy, dead-and-alive air, rather discomposed me. Although there was not so wide a difference

as is to be seen between the easterners and westerners of the United States, there was still a marked distinction between the ways of the Westralians and the ways of the people of New South Wales. It may, of course, have been my imagination, or a sensitiveness born of my late pastoral occupation. Be that as it may, I certainly fancied that the good folks of Geraldton were of a slower sort; that they were unused to black-and-blue individuals who came off ships, and decidedly wanting in the hail-fellow-well-met feeling so common in Silverton. For these reasons I was not impressed favorably; neither did I, during my first day's perambulation, feel at all at home in the place.

According to my usual custom, I interviewed the town at large on the subject of work. I made the rounds, taking scrupulous care not to miss a single house. But no results came of it. I think my countenance frightened them.

Late in the evening I found myself standing in the yard of a low beer-shop, feeling very tired and absurdly hungry. It was remarkable how the loss of two meals affected me. Not only did the vacuum within me cry aloud for food, but my heart was leaden, and my courage at the lowest ebb. Whatever induced me to halt at such a place as Riley's,—undoubtedly the worst in the town,—I do not know, unless it was the feeling that the fre-

quenters of such a house would be less likely to notice me than other persons. Or it may have been a certain kind of fellowship, which unfortunates have for one another, that drew me to the spot. Drinking villainous sheoak, and lounging in ungraceful attitudes along Riley's tumble-down veranda, were some fifteen or twenty men. They appeared to be chiefly up-country men, who had come into town to knock down their checks and indulge in a periodical spree.

As I leaned wearily against one of the sides of the court taking in the scene,— I might with propriety say the obscene,— I found myself repeating the lines of that old hymn:

> Where every prospect pleases,
> And only man is vile.

It was a typical Australian night. The sky was cloudless, and a great, round moon, rising slowly behind the town, flooded the quiet street and its white houses, the little bay and its silvery sands, with a calm, cool radiance. A gentle land-breeze, bringing the odor of eucalyptus forests, wafted down from the slopes of the low range, and from the same direction came the tinkling sound of cow-bells. On the harbor side, the riding-light of the *Day Dawn* could be dimly seen, and one could hear a ceaseless plashing along the shore and a low grumbling from the reef.

The occasional howling of a dog, the rattle of a belated wagon, and the loud guffaws of Riley's customers were the only jarring notes. All these things, however, had but little fascination for me. My thoughts were on tucker bent.

I had stood there perhaps half an hour when two half-drunken old men appealed to me to settle an argument. After I had given my opinion, they invited me to drink with them; and although at the time bread would have been much more acceptable to me than beer, I gulped the sorry liquor down with the thought that, although it might not fatten, it would at least help fill — which, I beg leave to state, is the first consideration of a hungry man.

Sheoak, on an empty stomach, is a terrible thing to make a man's tongue wag; and it was not long before I told my new friends that I was in need of food. Upon this they very kindly plied me with bread and cheese until my appetite was satisfied. Later, they extended their hospitality to asking me to share their room, which offer I thankfully accepted, for the air was getting chilly, and a heavy dew was falling.

That night I lay on the floor of the shanty in which these two old fellows lived, between their beds. From the conversation that went on over my head after we had turned in I discovered that they were both lags and "lifers," that is to say, old convicts who

had been transported for life. Though it was evident that they had been out as "ticket-of-leave" men for many years, this fact did not make me feel any the more comfortable; for sleeping between two men who, for aught I knew, had received life-sentences for murder, was not particularly conducive to rest. Reflection told me, however, that as I had nothing to lose, I had therefore nothing to fear, so I gave myself a tighter roll in my blanket, and slept.

Next morning I started out on another round of inquiry for work. No success, however, attended it. There did not seem to be room for an extra hand in Geraldton. I fell to wondering how long I should be obliged to stay in the place, and how on earth I should ever be able to get out of it. Kimberley, the object of my dreams, seemed farther away than it did from Adelaide — though in reality I was fifteen hundred miles nearer. News came that thousands were flocking there from New Zealand, South Africa, and all parts of the colonies, and I chafed exceedingly under the enforced delay in my journey.

All that day I walked from one end of the main street to the other, like a caged animal. Some of the inhabitants, I am sure, took me for a madman. I did not care, however; I was determined to keep myself constantly before them. About sundown my advertising was rewarded. A woman, whom I had passed

several times during the day, stopped me and asked whether I was "staying anywhere." I turned the most sightly side of my face toward her, and replied that although the whole of Geraldton was my abiding-place, I had no special bed upon which to lay my head, nor any regular table at which to eat; neither had I, unless it might be a good-looking lady like herself, a friend in the whole of Westralia. Upon this, she told me that she kept a boarding-house, and that I might, if I chose, "come down to her place" and pay her when I got employment. Needless to say, I accepted Mrs. Meggs's offer with great alacrity, and from that moment my poor opinion of the town changed.

After the *Day Dawn's* scant fare, my new quarters were very much to my taste. Mrs. Meggs, I discovered, kept the swellest house in Geraldton, her cooking was quite the best it was ever my good fortune to indulge in on the western coast, and her boarders were irreproachable. Among these were two bank clerks, a lawyer, the druggist, the auctioneer, a flourishing butcher who had lost his wife, and several young men who worked in the stores. There were no women. Except in the large cities of Australia, women are almost never found in boarding-houses or hotels. Mrs. Meggs, however, had two good-looking daughters, Mary and Annie, who made up amply for this deficiency. It is my firm be-

lief that every man in the house was in love with one or the other. There was also a Mr. Meggs, but as he tended the north lighthouse and slept during the greater part of the day, he was not much in evidence. I remember him only as a genial old graybeard, who had acquired fame in the district by successfully cutting his own hair.

I think Mrs. Meggs must have had the gift of prophecy, for a few days after I took up my abode in her comfortable house, Mr. Ashley, the agent to whom the sheep had been consigned, set me to work.

This time my task was simplicity itself. Being given a horse, a cart, and a crowbar, I was instructed to demolish the walls of an old jail on the outskirts of the town, and transfer the bricks from it to my employer's yard. My wages were twenty-eight shillings a week — just three more than I was paying for my board. Though I was glad enough to do anything that would enable me to pay my way, and very grateful to Mr. Ashley, I could not help feeling that, with such a surplus, my chances of bidding good-by to Geraldton were rather slim.

During the next three or four weeks I alternately wielded the crowbar and drove the old gray mare. For amusement, I made violent love to Annie, the youngest of Mrs. Meggs's daughters, and thus contrived to make the time pass pleasantly.

A somewhat tall, graceful girl was Annie. She had light and plentiful hair, which grew charmingly about her neck, and a face at once regular of feature, delicately tinted, and lighted by the bluest of eyes. She had a natural refinement of manner, too, and her usual expression was one of sweet thoughtfulness. When this was chased away by a smile, however, her rosy cheeks would dimple prettily, and she became a picture of ripe Australian beauty.

As my attentions to the fair Annie were not scorned, I soon succeeded in making half Mrs. Meggs's boarders hate me heartily. One of the bank clerks, who had previously been condescendingly affable, now assumed an ultra bank-clerk air of superiority, and gave me to understand that he considered it infra dig. to speak to me. The druggist took to talking much about adventurers; and the flourishing butcher, when Annie hovered over the back of my chair a little longer than usual, or gave me an extra large helping of pie, was in the habit of sniffing audibly. To all of which I retaliated by loud conversations with my friend the auctioneer, who was from Melbourne, and about to return, concerning the slowness and stupidity of Geraldton and its inhabitants.

We agreed that a man who could be content in such a benighted place must, of necessity, be lacking in common intelligence, and be incapable of making a living else-

where. We were constantly making a laughing-stock of the other boarders, and showing them, by our larger knowledge of the world, how ignorant we considered them. In addition to this I took pains to monopolize Miss Annie's time and flaunt my success in the face and eyes of my competitors. Life at Mrs. Meggs's boarding-house was, on the whole, enjoyable and most amusing.

Now, although I made a point of getting as much fun out of life as possible during my delay in Geraldton, I never ceased in my endeavors to get away from it. I always went off to the semimonthly mail-steamer on her way north and tried for a passage, and I secured all the information I could get about the up-country roads and the coast. At one time I thought of continuing my pilgrimage on foot, following the coast-line until I reached Derby. This scheme, however, I found impracticable, as the country from Geraldton up, except in two or three localities, was uncivilized. The telegraph-line had been extended as far as a place called Roebourne, some seven hundred miles to the northward, but it would be impossible to follow this track without packhorses and all the essentials for a bush campaign. Beyond Roebourne it was worse still, the country being largely unexplored and inhabited by blacks. I was persuaded, therefore, that to the sea only I must look for the means of making another lap toward the gold-fields.

In Geraldton I learned for the first time of the Torres Straits pearl-fishing industry. I was astonished to find that from Sharks Bay to Port Darwin the chief export and source of wealth was mother-of-pearl. From the stray travelers who stopped at Mrs. Meggs's on the way south, I heard that the fleet of pearling-vessels, after having partially exhausted the more northern waters, was gradually edging down the coast, and was then working near the Lacipede Islands. I learned also that the town of Cossack, which is the nearest port to Roebourne, was the headquarters of the fleet.

As I was told that Cossack was a place where money was quickly made, and as, moreover, it was comparatively near Derby, I thought it would be a good plan for me to try and get there. It would be much easier, I argued, to get a passage to Cossack than to Derby, because of the rush to the latter place, and, with my knowledge of sailoring, I felt that it would not be difficult to ship aboard a "pearler." If I could accomplish this it would be merely a matter of a few months before I should have enough money to carry me the remainder of my journey.

The opportunity to sail for Cossack, as you may imagine, did not present itself at once. With the exception of the steamers, there was no regular connection with that port. I was forced, therefore, to content myself with Ger-

aldton and continue my varied labors for some time.

Dear old Mrs. Meggs, whose heart I had won by a few simple acts of gratitude, treated me like a son, as indeed I might have been had I stayed there long enough; and I shall ever think of her comfortable house as the one place of all my Australian residences that seemed to be worthy the name of home.

My admiration of Annie, meanwhile, from being a mere pastime, grew into something which, for want of a better word, I must call calf-love. After the dishes were washed in the evening, at which function I officiated as "wiper," we always went for a walk on the beach: Annie in a starched blue dress — she always wore blue, did Annie — and a great yellow straw hat with corn-flowers on it, and I in a clean pair of white "moleskins," a flannel shirt, and a silk handkerchief round my neck. We walked together, read together, sang sentimental songs together, and even went to church together. We were together, in fact, on all possible occasions, and, as I have intimated before, it was only by a special intervention of Providence that I did not become a benedict, and settle down as a light-house-keeper, or something of that nature, in Geraldton.

One evening, while Annie and I were sitting on the beach, the thing happened. It was just between daylight and dark. Out in

the bay a slight haze veiled both the ocean and the sky, and there was no horizon. From the end of the boiling reef, out and up to the zenith, it was all one tone of pearly gray. Against this background the sails of a few fishing-boats, reflecting the glory of the copper disk behind us, made glowing spots of red and orange. Suddenly out of the pearly tone there came a broad arrow-head of foam, with a dark line above it. As we watched, the dark line became broader and broader; then the mist seemed to rise slowly, and we made out the bow of a large vessel coming into the harbor. Another moment, and the haze above her bowsprit thinned, and, like an apparition, there appeared a lofty, yellow-tinted cloud of canvas. On like a golden ship she came, in the light of the setting sun, until she was fairly within the shelter of the bay. Then one by one her kites were lowered, her courses clewed up, her maintopsail backed, and she pointed her nose to windward with a mighty splash and the rattle of rushing cable. A sailing-ship had at last come to anchor in the harbor.

The arrival of the *Ormond Castle* — for such proved to be her name — did two things. It stirred me to the remembrance that I had a goal to reach, and it fathomed the depth of my affection for the younger Miss Meggs. The latter, I fear, was very shallow. Upon learning that the vessel was to discharge part

of her cargo in Geraldton and the remainder in Cossack, I straightway threw off the spell under which Annie's beauty had laid me, and determined that the *Ormond Castle* should not leave Geraldton without me.

I soon made the acquaintance of the *Ormond Castle's* captain. He was a fat, red-faced little man, who rolled when he walked, like a barrel in a fair wind. After several ineffectual attempts to induce him to let me work my passage, he agreed to carry me to Cossack for the nominal sum of one pound; whereupon I again resorted to my old friend the watch. This time, however, I sold it outright. Once more, then, I was ready to move onward.

About ten days later I bade a tearful adieu to my good friends in Geraldton, and sailed away.

Our trip round to Cossack was without incident. Captain Marshall, although a strict disciplinarian, I found the jolliest of skippers and the most kind-hearted of men. During my short stay aboard his ship I amused myself by painting the "fancy work" on the poop and lending a hand generally. For this small service the captain generously returned me the value of my passage-money in much-needed "slops" (clothes).

A week of pleasant sailing brought us to Nickol Bay, where, about two miles offshore, we came to anchor at the mouth of Cossack

Creek. The rise and fall in the tide at this port is so great that although large vessels may enter safely on top of the flood, at low water the channel is practically dry. No sooner was the mud-hook down than the captain ordered away one of the boats, and, with two apprentices and myself at the oars, we pulled toward shore.

Now, I had heard so much about Cossack, its pearling-fleet, its spendthrift divers, and its wealth, that the thought of seeing the place raised what would ordinarily have been a sense of natural curiosity in me to a feeling of positive excitement. I was eager to set foot in this much-talked-of town, and to be at work again. As we pulled, I frequently glanced over my shoulder to catch the first glimpse of the new Eldorado. Entering the creek, we passed a sadly out-of-plumb little box on stilts, which the captain said was the lighthouse, and then found ourselves between a low, mangrove-covered island on one side, and a series of rocky, spinnefex-covered hills on the other. We continued up the creek for perhaps half a mile, when the stream suddenly widened, and I caught sight of a few buildings among the sand-hills to the right. We must be getting near the port, thought I. A few minutes later, however, the boat's nose slued violently; the skipper cried, "Weigh enough!" and we grounded on the sand.

"Well, here we are, my boy," said the cap-

tain, as he stepped ashore. "Good-by, and good luck to you." He thereupon shook hands with me in his hearty, genial fashion, and started up the beach. And I, as soon as I had tightened up the straps of my swag, followed suit.

The town, I imagined, could not be seen from the level of the water's edge. I therefore plowed through the ankle-deep sand to the little ridge above high-water mark, and looked expectantly inland. With the exception of three good-sized buildings, all of the inevitable galvanized-iron type, and a cluster of disreputable shanties made chiefly of empty beer-cases and flattened kerosene-cans, I saw nothing to warrant the name of town. "Heavens!" said I to myself; "this surely can't be Cossack!" The only moving object in sight was a man pitching an overturned boat, about a hundred yards distant. I went toward him. As I approached, he laid down his brush and stared at me as though I had dropped from another planet.

"Would you mind telling me the way to Cossack, please?" I asked.

He stared at me harder still and replied tersely: "You 're in it."

"What!" said I, aghast, pointing to the three buildings and the shanties, "is this Cossack?"

"Of course," was the surprised reply.

With a muttered "My God!" I sat down

in the sand and burst into laughter. The ridiculousness of it all quite overcame my feeling of disappointment, and I laughed until the tears came. The man must have thought me crazy, for after looking at me in rather a puzzled way he began to move off. I checked him by asking where the fleet was.

"What fleet?" said he.

"The pearling-fleet."

"Oh, they 're out on the grounds now."

"Far?"

"Three or four hundred miles."

At this, my heart, like a barometer before a storm, began to sink.

"When do you expect the boats in again?" I continued.

"In about six months," he thought.

My barometer sank lower still. "Do you suppose there is any chance for a fellow to get work about here?" was my next question.

"Don't know as there is," he replied. "There was some talk last summer of building a railroad from here up to Roebourne, but that 's fell through for the present. You see," he explained, "this 'ere 's a pretty dull time. All the boats is out for the season, and shearing don't start for the next four months. No; I don't know as there 's anything doing just now."

My informant certainly did not look as though he was overworked. Clad in a pair of blue-cotton pants, a gauze undershirt, and

a broad-brimmed hat, with his face, arms, and feet burned almost black with the tropical sun, he looked the picture of well-satisfied laziness.

Of course I had no money — not a solitary copper. I was used to that, however, and it did not trouble me much. Having lived without money so long, I had grown strangely indifferent as to whether my pockets were well lined or empty. The one thing I feared was lack of food. This was my first need, and such is the constancy and insistence of the need that, until it is satisfied, all other wants are lost sight of. The worst of it is that philosophy does not help you when you are hungry — you cannot argue with an empty stomach. As I had eaten nothing but a ship's biscuit before leaving the *Ormond Castle*, my only sensation, after having taken in Cossack, was one of hunger.

I began at once to call upon the inhabitants of Cossack and ask them for work. I was not at all particular what work I undertook, but stood prepared to swear myself capable of digging a grave, managing a bank, shearing a sheep, or surveying a township, if it were necessary. Unfortunately, none of these things was required of me.

At the store, at that time the only one in the northwest, I made a special effort; I also tried to coax a job out of the postmaster, and the keepers of the three pubs. Luck was not with me, however; I could find no one in

the whole of Cossack willing to give me a day's work.

As I walked about this little, barren island,— for Cossack was surrounded by water at high tide,— and noted its heat (114° in the shade), its cosmopolitan inhabitants, and its tropic stagnation, I felt that I had reached an outpost — that I had arrived at the last stage of civilization. To a man looking for work, Geraldton had certainly not been very encouraging, but in comparison with Cossack it was a seventh heaven. It took me but a very short time to realize that in coming to Cossack I had walked deliberately into a trap from which there was small chance of escape. To the north, east, and south lay a country impassable except with horses; to the west there rolled the blue waters of the Indian Ocean, whose fair face was wrinkled by the passage of a very slow steamer just once a month. This was Cossack's only tangible connection with the world.

Although I was not in the mood for observation, I could not help noticing in Cossack a decided Oriental flavor. It was plain that this little settlement was in touch with the East Indies. In the warehouse of the store I observed that all the labor was done by a gang of Chinamen under the direction of a white man. The town carpenter was a Japanese, and the shanties were inhabited entirely by Javanese, Manilamen, natives of

Timor, East Indians, and Kanakas. On the outskirts of the town I ran across a camp of aboriginal Australians, or "blackfellows," as they are called — the first I had seen. They were an ill-looking, weak-kneed, odoriferous lot; and at first sight I ceased to wonder why the race had disappeared so rapidly from the civilized parts of the continent.

Saving a few rock-oysters, which I chipped from the rocks at low water, I had nothing to eat that day. When night came, I crawled under an old boat's sail that had been spread upon the beach to dry, and with the murmur of the waters in my ears fell asleep. In the morning the sail was wet and stiff with dew. Before sun-up I was tramping along the red, dusty road to Roebourne, where I arrived about nine o'clock. It was a miserable little township, scattered along the side of a low, rocky range, and facing a vast red plain which spread eastward to the sky-line. Not a tree, a blade of grass, nor any green thing was to be found within its limits. All was parched, stony, and barren. I wondered how and why people lived in such a place. I learned afterward that the reason why Roebourne had been founded amid such desolation was the fact that it possessed a never-failing pool of water. Since it also boasted of a church, a court-house, and a jail, it was supposed to be a distinct improvement upon Cossack.

Here I again went through my customary appeals for work. The store,— a branch of the one in Cossack,— the six hotels, so called, the blacksmith's shop, and every house in the township received a visit from me — all without encouragement, however.

One feature about Roebourne struck me particularly, and that was the spectacle made by the native prisoners at work. They were employed in making and mending the streets of the town. As they were given to bolting at every opportunity, they were chained to the wheelbarrows with which they worked, and thus effectually hobbled. One end of the chain was permanently fastened to a staple in the barrow, and the other end was passed round the neck of the blackfellow and secured by a large padlock. The prisoners, with the exception of waist-cloths, were naked, and this, with their long tangled hair, repulsive features, and general "get-up," made quite a startling picture. When first I saw a gang of these blackfellows coming from the jail with their clanging chains and barrows, I stood, and stared, and wondered.

Two days passed. I had not been able to get work, neither had I eaten a mouthful during that time. Sundown found me sitting on the bank of the never-failing pool, thinking over my strange position. For three days nothing but a few rock-oysters had passed my lips, and I was ravenous. To judge by

the effect that those three days of fasting had upon my vitals, it is certain that as a professional faster I should be a dismal failure. It was an experience, however. I was getting into the habit of looking at things in that way and seeing the amusing side. The worse the fix, the funnier it seemed to find myself in it. But living on tobacco-smoke and water was an experience which, I felt, ought not to be carried too far, and I resolved that on the morrow I should deliver myself into the hands of the police as a person without visible means of support.

Thus musing, I presently became aware that I was being approached from behind. Turning, I saw that it was the manager of the Roebourne branch of the store — a tall, finely built fellow, not more than three or four years my senior. Seating himself on a rock beside me, he asked, "What luck?"

I told him briefly of my failure, and we fell to talking. As the conversation naturally took a personal direction, it was not long before he discovered the lamentable state of my pocket and stomach, whereupon he promptly asked me to take dinner with him at Bachelors' Hall.

He explained, as we ascended the hill together, that Bachelors' Hall was the home of a club composed of some twelve or fifteen young men, who hired a Chinaman to cook for them.

In a few minutes we reached the place. It was a dilapidated old building, with a brush-thatched roof, and everything about it very much out of plumb. Inside, however, it was as comfortable as was necessary in such a climate. After being introduced to the club as "Johnny Fananbag, the pudden-buster," a place was made for me at the table, and I fell to. If the reader, while in a state of health, has ever starved for three days, he will appreciate the zeal with which I ate that meal, but not otherwise. I think I frightened the Chinaman by my frequent applications for "more." When at last I was satisfied, my good Samaritan took me to his own shanty, behind the store, where we passed the evening talking.

My friend's name was Mark Hargreaves, though I found he was universally known by the nickname of Sandi. Why he was so called is a question I have never been able to answer, for he was neither a Scotchman nor of a sanguine complexion. He was a native-born Australian, hailing from Taree, New South Wales.

In Sandi's shanty I was rather astonished to find signs of culture. Books which showed the owner to be a man of no common tastes were scattered everywhere, and stuffed birds, kangaroo-skins, native weapons, and a collection of minerals gave this rough abode an air of refinement.

That evening was the beginning of one

of those strong personal friendships which men sometimes form. Thrown together by accident, without the slightest knowledge of each other's previous life, without a tie, indeed, to bind us, we nevertheless became friends at once. In the few hours we were together we shared confidences, spoke of our ambitions, and made mutual plans for the future.

During our talk Sandi told me that he had one man under him whom he had been trying to get rid of for some time. He had already applied to the superintendent at Cossack for his removal, but that gentleman had not as yet seen fit to act. Sooner or later the man would doubtless be discharged, in which case there would be an opening for me. In view of this, my friend advised me to return to Cossack and impress myself upon the superintendent's mind by frequent interviews. In the meantime he (Sandi) would do all in his power to help me.

Next morning, therefore, I returned to Cossack. With a friend at my back and a loan of ten shillings in my pocket, I took the road with as smart a step and as cheery a whistle as were mine in the halcyon days of the Silver Crest. I saw Mr. Sydney Hyde, the superintendent, that afternoon, and had a long talk with him. Among other things I told him that as he was the only person in that part of the country from whom I could

hope to get work, I intended to camp on the beach within sight of the store until he wanted me. Before leaving him I asked if I might have a few of the empty flour-bags which were lying about the warehouse, and received permission to help myself. These when sewed together with a palm and needle made quite a serviceable tent, which I pitched in the sand just above high-water mark.

It took me two or three days to get settled, for I had several things to make. I needed cooking-utensils, a fireplace, a bunk to sleep in, and other minor necessaries. A kettle I made out of a large tomato-can and a piece of fencing-wire. I also hammered a scrap of corrugated-iron roofing into a frying-pan. Four forked stakes driven into the sand made the foundation of my bunk; two broken oars and two flour-bags completed it. When all was finished, I surveyed it with much pride. For a beach-comber I had a very snug little shanty.

But still the question of work harassed me. Sandi's loan would soon be gone, and then what? It was plain that I must do something. All one day I sat in the sand thinking. Not until the dogs of the township had ceased barking, and the driftwood on my fire had burned low, did the right thought come. Then I arose, stretched myself, shook my fist at the world in general, and said: "To the deuce with working for other people! To-morrow I 'll go into business for myself."

VIII

BEACH-COMBING

PLANS which look rose-colored by artificial light are apt to take on a colder tone when examined by the glare of day. It was thus with my plan. In the evening I had seen it only as an harmonious whole; but in the morning I faced the details, and I hesitated. This state of mind, however, did not last long. Before I had finished the meal which by courtesy I called breakfast, I had made up my mind to put my plan into operation. In short, I would become a fisherman.

From observation and inquiry I had gathered that both Cossack and Roebourne were fishless towns. The inhabitants lived mainly on freshly killed mutton and canned things. There was no fruit, and, with the exception of potatoes and onions, no vegetables. Though there were doubtless plenty of fish to be had for the catching, there were no fishermen. Under the circumstances it seemed to me that if the people had fish brought to their doors

they would gladly buy it. Such was my reasoning.

As for the method by which I should capture my fish, I had determined to adopt an unlawful one — I was going to use dynamite. I chose this way, not because I preferred to lay myself open to a fine, if caught, but for the reason that nets, lines, hooks, and legitimate tackle were beyond me. A few sticks of dynamite, a dozen percussion-caps, and a foot or two of fuse were all that I required to make a start. Working in the mine at Silverton had accustomed me to the use of the explosive, and, moreover, I had seen the thing put into practice on the west coast of South America some years before. Accordingly, after laying in a small stock of eatables, I boldly invested the remainder of my capital in the necessary materials for fish-killing.

My next move was to borrow a boat. This proving an easy matter, I was soon sculling down the creek in search of a suitable spot to begin work. A few experimental shots in midstream showed me that I could not operate to advantage where the tide was strong. I therefore guided my boat close under the rocks of the shore, keeping a sharp lookout for fish. After wasting the greater part of my ammunition in fruitless explosions, I resolved to wait until the tide went out and see if there were not some likely pools left along the shore. This theory proved practical. Out

by the mouth of the creek, at dead low water, I discovered what appeared to be an ideal place. It was a pool about one hundred feet long and fifty wide, and disconnected from the sea only for about two hours out of every twelve. In such a hole I felt sure that many fish would be left each tide. Dragging my dinghy to the edge of the pool, I launched her afresh, and pushed out quietly into the center. The water, which was about ten feet deep, was clear as crystal, and I saw several fish dart away from the shadow of the boat as it approached them. Convinced that I had found a good fishing-ground, I went ashore again and collected a handkerchief full of shell-fish, which I cut into small pieces and used as bait to draw the fish together. Then I arranged a cartridge and pitched it into the middle of them. The next instant the whole pool was convulsed, and its surface alive with floundering fish.

After picking up those which floated, I stripped and dived for those which lay with their white bellies showing at the bottom.

The shock of the dynamite explosion did not, apparently, kill many of the fish; by far the greater number were merely stunned, and regained consciousness very quickly. Strange to say, only those which were partially stunned came to the surface. Fully two thirds of the fish which came within the influence of the explosion stayed at the bottom.

When, after half an hour's good frolic in the water, I had picked up all the fish in sight, I found I had made quite a haul. Counting everything, my catch numbered over two hundred. Of these, perhaps a third were blow-fish, sting-rays, and other fish which, from their appearance, I judged to be unfit for food. The remainder were edible; mainly schnapper, rock-cod, sand-mullet, and butter-fish. Feeling very proud of my success, I lighted my pipe and lay down in the stem of the boat to dream of becoming a great fish-merchant.

With the flood-tide I drifted up the creek to Cossack, where I sold most of my haul that evening. Those which I was unable to dispose of at the seaport I sent up to Roebourne by a teamster, who agreed to sell them there for half the proceeds.

To the fastidious, hawking fish may not seem to be the most charming of pursuits; neither is it; yet when I look back upon that part of my life, I know that I was never more truly happy than when camping in my flour-bag tent on the sandy beach of Cossack. All my actual wants were supplied; the work was genuine sport to me, and I was without a care.

I lived in this way for several weeks. As no word came from my friend in Roebourne, I concluded that his efforts in my behalf had failed, and I gave the matter no further thought.

Early one morning, as I was walking in a state of nudity down to the creek for my usual plunge, I saw a strange figure standing at the water's edge. He was waving a ragged arm at a retreating boat, and swearing shockingly. I knew that a steamer from the south had arrived in the bay the night before, and I wondered if this person could be one of her passengers. Approaching him, I noticed that he held under his arm a small dog, who growled at me fiercely.

"Marooned, by ——!" he muttered, as he again shook his fist down the creek. Then catching sight of me, he gave voice to a faint "Hello!" of astonishment, and dropped the dog.

As the animal flew at me on the instant, I considered it wise to dive into the creek, without returning his master's salutation. While I was making my ablutions, the stranger calmly seated himself on a rock and waited. The dog meanwhile pattered back and forth at the water's edge, barking furiously. When I had finished, I began to wade in-shore. I wished the man and his dog would go. As I glanced out of the corner of my eye, I thought I detected a smile on the man's face, and internally I fumed.

The next moment he addressed me. "How is it — cold?" he asked, in a drawling voice.

"Cold? no," I replied; "it 's never cold in this place."

"Well, what place is this?" he returned.

"This place," said I, "is hell!" for I was angry.

"Ah, Esau," he answered, "you always were a bad-tempered little brute."

I gasped, for he had called me by an old nickname. Instantly I recognized him. Forgetful of the dog, my want of costume, and everything save the joy of meeting an old school-friend, I rushed ashore.

"Spider, old chap!"

"Esau, old man!"

We wrung each other's hand, and, with mutual expressions of surprise and pleasure, went up to the tent together.

Over our tea and damper that morning there were explanations. The principal events of six years were briefly told by each of us. Then came reminiscences of our life aboard the old school-ship — recollections which made our sides ache and our eyes fill. Everything began with "Do you remember," and everything ended with shrieks of laughter. The fights, the practical jokes, the mutiny, our escapades ashore, "Quack," the master-at-arms, "Jelly," the second officer, and Dolly, the captain's daughter, with whom the whole two hundred of us were violently in love — we spoke of them all, and lived over again those glorious days. Though ragged, penniless, and stranded, there surely were never two more jolly vagabonds than Cannon and I that day.

It appeared that Cannon, like myself, was making his way to the gold-fields. He had come from Cape Town, paying his passage like a gentleman to Albany, and thence to Perth. Here his money gave out, and after many vain attempts to ship, he had stowed away on the steamer then in the bay, the *Barracouta*. Upon being discovered, the captain imprisoned Cannon in the forepeak, swearing he would land him on a desert island. This threat Cannon believed had been carried out until he saw me.

Cannon, of course, took up his abode with me. We put up another bunk in the tent that afternoon, and also built a little extension to accommodate my friend's legs, for he was unusually tall, standing no less than six feet five inches in his stockings.

From that time forward I had a partner. Finding that the people did not care to buy fish every day, I had limited my excursions to twice a week. We netted enough, however, not only to live, but to save something. Our spare time we spent chiefly in playing cribbage. As we had no board, we used daily to mark out a huge equivalent in the sand, upon which four stout stakes took the place of pegs. I must say that there was rather more exercise connected with the game than we needed,— particularly when we had a good "hand" and "crib,"— but then that was all part of the fun.

But, like all good things, the fish business had an end. We were politely informed one morning, by a mounted policeman, that our unlawful proceedings had reached the ears of his Highness, the government resident at Roebourne, who sent word that unless we at once gave up our wicked ways, he should be obliged to prosecute us. Naturally we gave them up. There was nothing else to be done. We sent the government resident a mess of sand-mullet with our compliments, and promised never to dynamite again.

For some time after this, we did nothing; for the very good reason that we did not know what to do. As the little money we had saved from the fish business, however, disappeared with astonishing quickness, we were soon forced to make a move in some direction. This time we took to shooting ducks for a living. About two miles from the township there was a chain of lakes in which teal and other wild duck were plentiful. Here, with two borrowed guns and Cannon's dog Punch to retrieve, we were to be found daily for perhaps a fortnight. We were not very sportsmanlike, I am afraid. Our main and sole idea was to get birds; and no matter whether they were sitting, standing, or on the wing, we potted them like the "pot-hunters" we were. Occasionally we got a kangaroo, a rock-wallaby, a brush-turkey, or a few pigeons, for all of which we found ready sale. Al-

though our new work was not so profitable as our previous occupation, it served to keep us in tobacco, rum, and other necessaries.

Just as our shoulders were getting accustomed to the kicking gun-butt, and our legs trained to swamp-tramping, this means of living also came to an end. Whether it was the constant banging of our guns, or the beginning of the migrating season, we could not determine, but certain it was that within two days every self-respecting duck had left the neighborhood, and we were again obliged to retire from business.

During the idle days which followed, we racked our brains for a fresh scheme. We even went so far as to write a letter to the government resident suggesting the removal of a dangerous bunch of rocks from the channel of the creek, and offering our "experienced" services for the same at nominal wages. It availed us nothing, however, and we fell back upon playing cribbage in the sand the livelong day. The one bane of our life at this time was Punch, who, having no love for the game, would persist in running off with our pegs and scampering all over our perishable board. We tried to teach him that he must not cross the lines which we had drawn. In this respect, however, he was certainly a most stupid animal, for he never learned to distinguish between our cribbage-board and the rest of the beach.

But I must not forget to speak of the one exciting thing that happened during our beach-combing experience. We had just begun a game, and Cannon had triumphantly taken "first blood" by turning up a jack. On a sudden he dropped his hand, and, looking over my head, exclaimed:

"Great heavens, Esau! Here 's a steamer coming up the creek!"

Sure enough, a big tramp, her decks crowded with men, had just rounded the bend, and was picking her way cautiously toward the lighter landing. She was evidently a vessel bound for Derby, and captained by a man unacquainted with the coast. Otherwise she would not have entered the creek. For while there was undoubtedly water enough on top of the "springs" to bring her in, there was not sufficient room to turn so large a boat, which meant that there was a very good chance of sticking her on the beach for a month, or indeed for good.

At sight of her all Cossack hastened down to the water's edge. As far as we could learn, such a spectacle had never been seen there before. When abreast of the landing, her anchor was dropped, and she began to swing to the tide, which was still coming in. Before she slued half-way round, however, her stern grounded on the sand-bank running out from the island, and she keeled over broad-

side on to the tide, dragging her anchor and drifting bodily into the mangroves.

Excitement both aboard and ashore ran high, for a beaching seemed certain. The dropping of a second anchor stopped her drifting, but did not help her in any other way. In spite of the lather which the propeller churned under her black counter, and the kedges which were run out from the bow, her keel remained fast on the sand-spit. Unless she got off before the tide turned, we knew that she was a fixture.

Cannon and I hoped she would not get off. There would surely be work for us if the big steamer remained in the creek. Though, to all appearances, we seemed anxious for her safety, in our hearts we rejoiced. We looked into each other's eyes and grinned with delight as each effort to clear the vessel failed. We prayed for the ebb-tide with all the earnestness of full-blown wreckers.

Fortunately for the steamer and her passengers, however, our base hopes were not realized. At slack water they managed to get a stout line fast to a ledge of rock on the shore, and, at the eleventh hour, hauled her off. Whatever purpose the captain had had in bringing her into the creek, he abandoned it now. With a cheer from those aboard, she gradually gathered headway and passed out to sea. Nor did she even anchor in the bay, but continued on to the northward,

being satisfied, apparently, that Cossack was a bad place.

A little while after this event I thought out another plan for making a livelihood. It occurred to me that the profession of barbering in the northwest was as yet an untouched field. I do not mean to infer that the inhabitants never had their hair cut, but I do mean to say that they seldom had it cut respectably. In a place where hair was cut with wool-shears or horse-clippers, and cut then by anybody who had time, you can imagine, probably, what the average head looked like. Even the heads of the natives, who, in their attempts to ape their white brothers, bruised their hair off between two stones, were more artistic. Now, at sea I had earned the reputation of being able to crop hair with some degree of skill, and it seemed to me that if I could get a chance to show my ability in this line, I might work up a good trade. I talked the thing over with Cannon all one evening, who agreed with me that it was an excellent idea. Next morning, therefore, we began making the necessary preparations.

My barber's shop, you may be sure, was not a very grand affair. On the contrary, it was the simplest, lightest, and most airy of "establishments." Four upright poles driven into the sand, surmounted by a light frame and covered with coarse grass to keep off the direct rays of the sun, practically completed

it. For a barber's chair I picked up a small, empty beer-barrel, which I sank partly in the center of the mia-mia. It made, I thought, quite a seductive barber's chair. Then Cannon suggested that we should make a sign.

"Heavens, man!" he said, "we must hang out a sign, you know. How 's any one going to know what the place is, unless we have a sign?"

So we set to work making one; and, of course, it gave us more trouble than all the rest of the things put together. It 's the petty details that worry one, after all. First we drew one with lead-pencil on the bottom of a cardboard box which we begged from the store. This proved too flimsy at the start. It blew out of the bolt-ropes three times during the first hour, falling at last into the creek. Next we tried to paint a sign on a piece of old sail-cloth. In this also we were foiled, as the only pot of paint open in the town was white, which color would not show to advantage on the canvas. After several other useless experiments we finally solved the problem by burning a sign. With a red-hot nail and the side of an old brandy-case we turned out an advertisement which, when put into place on top of the shop, could be seen all over Cossack. It was a simple legend, merely:

"HAIR CUT HERE."

We then leveled the sand nicely all about, bought a large pair of scissors and a comb, and waited for customers.

"This reminds me," said Cannon, "of an old receipt for cooking jugged hare, which begins, 'First catch your hare.'"

"In that case, Cannon," I returned, "you had better try your hand at drumming up trade. But first you must have your own hair cut, so as to show what an artist I am."

"Right you are," he replied, seating himself on the barrel. "Look out for my ears, though."

Before I had finished my friend's blond poll we had a group of idlers round us, jeering and making impolite remarks. It was rather trying, I must say. We kept our tempers, however, and were presently rewarded by having two of our audience ask to be shorn. Thus did I earn my first money as a barber. The two shillings I received in payment we spent that night in beer, in which we pledged each other and drank to the success of our new business.

And, to our great delight, it was a success. Within twenty-four hours it was the fashion in Cossack to have one's hair cut by "the chap on the beach," and I was obliged to put "chafing-gear" on my finger and thumb to keep them from blistering. I verily believe that the Cossackers sat for me to a man. It was, or rather it would have been, a grand

thing for us, this barbering, if it had lasted. Unluckily, there were not enough people in the country, so that, after about eight days' snipping, there was no more hair to be snipped, and we were once more at our wits' ends for an occupation.

At last, however, our luck changed. We were lying on the beach, in front of our tent, watching the manœuvers of a small schooner which was tacking up the creek, when there suddenly appeared before us the superintendent of the store, and a man whom we recognized as an up-country squatter. In less than five minutes Cannon had been engaged by the station-owner, and I had received orders to take the next team to Roebourne, where my services were required as cellarman in the branch store. I need hardly say that we were not long in making preparations for our departure. When our swags were rolled up, we were ready. The tent, the barber's shop, the beer-barrel, and our unique collection of cooking-utensils we left for the benefit of the next unfortunates. Cannon drove off in the squatter's buckboard, with Punch on his knees, shortly after midday, and I journeyed inland with lanky Phil Maxwell, one of the store teamsters, a little later.

At Roebourne I was heartily welcomed by my good friend Sandi, who at once offered to share his shanty with me, saying that all that was needed to accommodate us both was

another stretcher or sleeping-cot. Next morning I was duly installed in my office as cellarman. It was without doubt the heaviest work I had yet undertaken.

When I think that I humped every sack of flour, oats, and potatoes, and hauled every case, barrel, or bale that came into Roebourne, I cannot help feeling a certain amount of respect for my shoulders. It was labor that at first took the skin off my back and made every particular muscle in my body ache; work which in that climate made the sweat run off me in streams and reduced me to fighting-weight. Yet I enjoyed it immensely, for I felt that at last I was earning my living in a regular, honest way, and that I should soon be able to proceed to the gold-fields. As my wages were good and my expenses light, it was not long before I began a bank-account.

Seven or eight months slipped by very rapidly. In the meantime Sandi and I became fast friends, and spent most of our time together. Our evenings we passed reading or playing cribbage, and on Sunday a kangaroo-hunt, a duck-shooting party, or a long ride down to some creek on the coast, gave us a little relaxation from our week's work. And sometimes we would go prospecting in the hills, or collecting objects for our little museum of natural history. To this we added, one day, a carpet-snake about fourteen feet

long, which I skinned and set up on a dead tree-trunk just inside our door. We had been troubled for some time by begging and thieving natives, but after the snake was put into position we could never induce a native to enter our door. They believed it was alive.

Roebourne was certainly a queer place. Three hundred and sixty-two days of the year it was as dry as the Sahara; the other three days it rained. And how it rained! I believe the average rainfall during this brief season was eight inches. A few weeks before the actual downpour, the sky, which through the remainder of the year was cloudless, would become overcast at night. It began with a narrow strip of black low down upon the eastern horizon, which crept higher and higher toward the zenith each succeeding evening until the whole heavens were covered. Then came the deluge. When this, the great event of the year, happened, all business was suspended, and the entire population camped upon tables and improvised structures until it was over. I shall never forget the three days four of us spent shivering in wet blankets on the mess-table at Bachelors' Hall. The water rushing down the hillside flooded the floor and formed a muddy river through the building; the roof leaked like a sieve, and we had nothing to eat but hardtack and condensed milk.

When the rain brought a "willy-nilly," or

cyclone, with it for company, as it occasionally did, the state of things was even more interesting. Most of the buildings were lashed down to the earth by means of stout wire ropes and sunken plates — a precaution which speaks for itself. After it was all over, Roebourne, this stony, barren township in which nothing could be induced to grow, would, within a few days, put on a coat of green. In three weeks the grass would be up to one's knees and the whole country gay with flowers. Three weeks later, however, and every vestige of verdure had disappeared, and no one who had not seen it would have believed in its existence.

Sometimes the rain skipped a year, and then the country suffered. Sheep and cattle died by the thousands; the price of stock dwindled to a fraction of its value in good times, and the whole district was impoverished.

Of the four hundred inhabitants of Roebourne thirteen only were women, and one of the thirteen held a position in the store. It was her duty to wait upon the other twelve when they wanted anything, and also to manufacture the gorgeous raiment with which the station-owners paid their native women.

When Miss Fernside became the bride of a squatter from the De Grey country, and abandoned her occupation of selling dress material and so forth, the firm sought in vain for

some one to take her place. They decided finally to throw the male and female departments into one, and to put me in charge. In due course of time, therefore, I handed over the cellar to another keeper, shed my overalls, and was initiated into the mysteries of boots, hats, wearing-apparel, and dry-goods in general.

Had Mr. Hyde searched throughout the length and breadth of Australia, he could not have found any one who knew less about such things than I. Even to this day I fail to discover the difference between linen and cotton. As I was somewhat accustomed to tackling new things by this time, however, I took hold of this one with all the characteristic confidence of youth. But before two days were over, I made a "bull" which created a laugh throughout the whole northwest.

I was upon a ladder trying to get the run of my stock, when there suddenly appeared a young lady from the "back country," asking to see Miss Fernside. Descending from my perch, I explained the situation and asked if I could serve her in any way.

After a good deal of what seemed to me unnecessary hesitation, she timidly said she would like to look at some "combinations."

"Combinations?" I repeated.

"Yes, please," she replied, looking out of the window.

"Oh, yes, certainly," I answered, not wishing to show my ignorance. "Please take a seat, and I will bring you some."

Upon this I hurried off in search of Sandi, for more light on the subject. On the way I remembered having seen in the grocery-room a certain mixture of fancy biscuits labeled "Combination," and I jumped at once to the conclusion that that was what she wanted. It was all plain to me then. The young lady, being from the back blocks, had very naturally drifted into the wrong department. Wishing to be obliging, I took the can down from its shelf, and hastened back to my fair customer.

"Excuse me for keeping you so long," I began, opening the can before her; "I—"

The young lady from the back country first gave me a withering look, then giggled, and lastly blushed furiously. I discovered then that I had made a mistake, and retreated ignominiously to ask Sandi what under heaven "combinations" were anyway.

Suffice it to say that they were an unmentionable article of underwear, much used in that part of the country. Upon learning the facts of the case, not a man in the store would help me out of my difficulty, and I was so long screwing up my courage to return to my customer that she, in the meantime, took her departure. Though she visited the store several times during her stay in town, she

never again asked for "combinations," and, as there was no other place where one could get them, it is only reasonable to suppose that she went without. After this little incident we called in the bookkeeper's wife whenever women made their appearance.

And now I have reached a point in my narrative where, for a time at least, the details of my vagabond life cease to be interesting. In real life we applaud and admire the successful man; the struggles and hardships of the poor have small charm for us. In stories, however, when a man has no more battles to fight, no more obstacles to overcome, when, in fact, he is successful, he at once degenerates into a very commonplace individual. As the next few months were made very smooth for me, I shall, therefore, give only an outline of the events which led up to my further adventures.

First I must tell you that, after having looked upon Kimberley as my goal for so long, I was obliged finally to give up the idea. For more than a year men had been pouring into that district. Thousands of experienced miners had reached the fields, thousands of pounds had been expended. In spite of these things no quantity of gold had reached the coast. With the exodus that set in before the ingoing tide fairly ended came the news that the Kimberley rush was a gigantic fizzle. Although gold was discovered on the Fitzroy and Margaret rivers, nothing but a few reefs

were found to be payable. The Kimberley rush was undoubtedly a splendid thing for Westralia, inasmuch as it brought money and people to open up the new country. Beyond that, however, I am not aware that it benefited any one. This being the case, I turned my attention to the accumulation of capital.

Later a fortunate speculation in horses so turned my head that I threw up my position in the store. I deserved, doubtless, to suffer for such foolishness, but my lucky star was then in the ascendant, and the step which seemed to my friends so utterly unreasonable was the means of my being temporarily appointed chief officer of H. M. S. *Emu*.

The *Emu*, which was a schooner, and, at that time, the only man-of-war owned by the Westralian government, was on her way north for the yearly inspection of the pearl-fisheries. She had put into Cossack with sickness aboard and short of both her officers. As I happened to be the only man at liberty with any kind of a certificate, the position was offered me. A pleasant cruise of three months, up the coast as far as Roebuck Bay and down again to Cossack, was, therefore, my next move.

During the trip I gained a fairly good knowledge of the coast, together with an insight into the pearling industry. And so fascinated did I become with the excitement of the latter, that I determined upon my return to purchase a boat and turn pearl-fisher.

IX

FISHING FOR PEARLS

DAWN on the pearling-grounds. Though it wants yet an hour of sunrise, the fleet is astir. In the gray half-light of awakening day the nail-can stoves are sending up from their hard-wood fires faint, lazy columns of bluish smoke, and the pungent odor of coffee mingles with that of charred wood. The sea, which still awaits the morning breeze, lies flat and dark like a lake of pitch, in which the motionless luggers seem to be stuck. So still is nature that the sounds of the workers, making ready against the rising of the sun, are strangely distinct. On all sides talking can be heard, the expressionless monotone of men newly waked, also the scraping of frying-pans, the splashing of decks being wet down, and the clink of divers' accoutrements. As the light increases, the boats take definite shape, a bulky figure being dressed is to be seen at the stern of each lugger, salutations are shouted from one to another, and sails are loosed. Then comes the wind, first in a

few uncertain cat's-paws, later in a steady increasing breeze from the east. The boats, which had hitherto been swinging to the set of the tide, now turn with one accord their noses to the wind, and, like restive horses, begin to caper, plunge, rear, and tug at their iron tethers. This is the starting-signal for the race to windward. The fleet at once breaks into a chant of many tongues, for men of twenty nationalities sing as they hoist the sails and anchors. One by one, to right and left, the boats slip out. Soon the night anchorage is deserted, and the sea is alive with a hundred tacking luggers, making for the weather edge of the "patch." Suddenly, from behind the low sand-hills of the distant coast, there rises the great, pale sphere of early day. This, too, is a signal. The separated fleet now draws together again, sails flutter, fouled anchors go rattling to the coral sea-bed, "tenders" hurry with helmets and face-glasses, air-pumps begin to wheeze, and with loud splashes the divers go overboard. There follow a rapid paying out of life- and pipe-lines, a few shouted orders from excited tenders, and the day's work of the pearl-fishers has begun. Such is the picture which comes before me when I think of my first morning upon the pearling-grounds.

But it is necessary that I first go back a little and explain how and where I procured my boat and outfit. Before leaving the

"grounds" in the *Emu*, I had made arrangements with a certain Captain Suggitt, of the brig *Moscow*, to return by the next Singapore steamer and purchase one of his five luggers. The boat in question was known as "Suggitt's No. 5." She was unusually small, being less than five tons, and somewhat ancient. As she was said to be a good, stanch little sea-boat, however, and since she was to be bought with pumps, sails, and diving-kit complete for the modest sum of one hundred and thirty pounds, I concluded that she would answer my purpose exceedingly well. As soon as possible, therefore, after being paid off from the *Emu*, I returned to Lagrange Bay, where I became the guest of Captain Suggitt until No. 5 was overhauled and our business completed. And since Captain Suggitt and his old brig were two of the curiosities of the grounds, a short description of them will not, I think, be out of place.

For nearly thirty years the "Pirate" and the *Old Cow*, as they had been nicknamed, had been hovering about the northern coasts of Australia. Suggitt's reputation, as his nickname implies, was a bad one. In his early days he had been ostensibly engaged in the bêche-de-mer business, but it was said that he had gutted more wrecks on the Barrier Reef than sea-slugs, and that, like a carrion-crow, he was invariably in at the death. There

were stories, too, of false lights, aye, and of murder, in which he figured conspicuously. During his life among the islands he had picked up, at various times and places, no less than four wives, all of whom, with their children, lived in old sail-cloth camps on the long poop-deck of his vessel. Heavens, what a poop it was! It was at once a carpenter-shop, a smithy, a quarter-deck, and a populous native village. Dogs, naked children, fowls, parrots, and gins,[1] all were to be found under the huge patched awning that covered the *Moscow's* after-deck. On the port side, close to the rail, a narrow passage led to the wheel and to the camp of the captain, his rum-cask, and his latest wife. Several of his children were grown up. One daughter was married to his cook, an East Indian, another to one of his Kanaka divers, and yet another, a pretty girl named Maiwa, lived with his chief and only mate. At each of these so-called marriages, Suggitt had not only given away the bride, but had also performed the ceremony. His favorite boast was that he knew the coast better than any living man,—which was doubtless true,—and that he had proved the existence of every rock and reef on it by feeling them with the bottom of his brig. Although the *Moscow* was a bluff-bowed, square-sterned, pot-bellied old tub, barnacled up to the chain-plates, and green with sea-grass, he never

[1] Native women.

tired talking about her marvelous sailing qualities. He believed, or professed to believe, that she needed a feed of green stuff occasionally, to satisfy which he would periodically run her nose up into the mangroves, and there let her browse for several days. At such times he was invariably to be found propped up against his rum-cask, gloriously tight. The *Moscow* leaked so badly that, in spite of a windmill, she had to be pumped out night and morning. In bad weather it was as much as the crew could do to keep her afloat. When all hands were worn out with constant pumping, her original captain was wont to stick her up on the nearest sand-beach, where, at low water, he would go over the side with a large auger and bore enough holes in her bottom to let the water out. As soon as she was empty, he would plug the holes, and, at high water, float her off with a fresh start. A remarkable man, indeed, was the "Pirate."

While aboard the *Moscow* I cast about for a good diver, and considered myself fortunate in securing the services of a white man named Joe (I never knew his other name), who was said to be an excellent shell-gatherer and a lucky one. Joe was a short, sandy-haired cockney, who had been trained for the prize-ring, but who had lost his backers because of an ungovernable thirst. He had the most remarkable vocabulary of any man I ever

knew. It consisted of perhaps five hundred words, four hundred and ninety-nine of which were oaths. These things, however, were not considered at all unfavorable to him as a diver. "Keep him away from drink and he will make money for you," was the advice I received with him. I engaged Joe at the usual white diver's wages, namely, "twenty pounds per month, twenty pounds for each ton of shell collected, and found."

For hands, I hired four Malays, by name Ketchee, Simong, Ah-wong, and Dola, to whom I paid two pounds ten per month, and found. The position of tender, the sixth man necessary to complete my crew, I intended to fill myself.

After No. 5 had been thoroughly renovated, her air-pumps examined and cleaned, her diving-suits tested, her name changed to the *Norma*, and a month's provisions stowed in her diminutive lockers, she was at last ready for sea. As she lay alongside the bulky *Moscow*, with her trucks scarcely reaching the brig's sheer-poles, she looked small enough in all conscience — too small, indeed, for six men to live aboard. I slid down to her deck, however, in the most happy and hopeful of moods, for I was proud of being both master and owner of my own craft, eager for the excitement of a new adventure, and sure that I was on the edge of fortune. Impatiently I gave orders to cast off; then, hoisting the sails,

we bore away for the "Ninety-mile Beach," where the fleet was at work.

Before I proceed further with my narrative, it seems necessary that I make clear some few things in connection with what is known as the pearl-fishing industry.

To begin with, pearl-fishing, as carried on to-day, is not merely fishing for pearls, as may be inferred, but chiefly for the shells in which the gems are found — the commercial "mother-of-pearl" shell. Pearls of any value are so rarely found that it is upon the shells, and the shells alone, that the pearl-fisher must depend for his "bread and butter." Unlike the common, edible oyster, which attaches itself to rocks and grows in beds, the pearl-oyster is connected with the bottom only by an easily broken byssus issuing from the butt of its shell, and is invariably found singly. Several may be picked up within a few feet of one another, but, as a rule, they lie widely scattered over a large expanse of rocky ocean-bed. For this reason mainly, the many drags, scoops, and other diver-saving methods devised by theorists for the collection of pearl-shells have been failures. The only way to secure the pearl-oyster in payable quantities is to search for it with human eyes.

Shell-gathering, indeed, is very like mushroom-gathering. It would be as sensible to drag the fields at random for the one as to haul a scoop-net over the sea-bottom for the

other. As the mushroom is not to be discovered in every field, neither is the pearl-oyster to be found on every bottom. Mud and sand it apparently has no liking for, preferring a coral bottom, well covered with submarine growths. Such places are called patches by the pearling fraternity, and they are worked over until thoroughly "skinned."

When a patch is struck, the boats work gradually up to windward until they find the weather edge. Here they drop anchors, fouled so that they may act merely as drags; the divers go overboard, and the drift to leeward begins. While the boats drift on the surface, the divers walk over the patch below, traveling in zigzag fashion so that they may see as much ground as possible. The speed of drifting, to some extent, can be regulated by paying out or hauling in chain. The more cable out the greater resistance, and consequently the slower the drift; and *vice versa*. As soon as the diver finds that he is off the patch, he signals to be pulled up, and beats to windward again for another drift.

This is the usual mode of working. It may be thought that, with so many vessels engaged in one locality, the supply of shell would rapidly be exhausted. Such, however, is not the case, for not only are these patches often many square miles in area, but a diver's horizon, even in the clearest water, is extraordinarily limited; and should he chance to walk again

in his or another diver's footsteps, it is not at all unlikely that he will pick up as many shells the second time as the first.

Pearl-shells, when separated from the spongy growths which usually form on the upper shell, and divested of their horny edges, are about the size of an ordinary breakfast-plate, and average in weight two pounds. In the London market they bring from one hundred to one hundred and fifty pounds per ton, or, to bring it down to simpler figures, from two to three shillings per pair.

As for pearls, they are entirely a matter of luck. One man may open tons upon tons of shells without finding anything but a few hundred valueless "seeds," while another may take a small fortune out of a day's gathering. It has now been proved fairly conclusive that pearls are formed by the intrusion of some foreign substance between the mantle of the mollusk and its shell, which, becoming an irritation, is coated by the oyster with layer after layer of its own nacreous or pearly secretion until it becomes completely encysted. In all probability it is a minute parasite, for it is well known by divers that shells honeycombed by boring parasites yield the largest percentage of pearls.

On our way to the "Ninety-mile Beach" Joe taught me the duties of a tender. The tender, I may say, is he who manages the boat, holds the life-line, and looks after the

general safety of the diver when below. He must keep his weather-eye open for squalls and collisions, must attend to the signals, and be careful not to get his man mixed up with a diver from another boat. He should hold the life-line so as just to feel the movements of the submarine worker; never tight enough to prevent free action, and never slack enough to allow the line to drag on the bottom and foul among the corals. Joe's signal-code was as follows:

1 jerk	Haul up.
2 jerks	More air.
3 jerks	Slack out chain.
4 jerks	Haul in chain or hoist a sail.
2 jerks and a shake .	Stand by to haul up bag.
1 jerk and a shake .	Danger. Haul up quickly.
1 shake	Haul in slack of pipe- or life-line.

My signals were but two: one shake to warn the diver that he was coming up under the boat; two shakes to let him know that he was approaching the anchor.

On reaching the patch where the fleet were at work, we at once began operations. Shells were fairly plentiful, the *Norma* behaved beautifully, the "boys" proved themselves smart, willing sailors, and again I looked into the future with a calm certainty of success.

Scarce a week had passed, however, before there came a set-back. It was about an hour after sundown, and Joe and I were lying in our bunks in the cabin, smoking. We had

not regularly turned in; we were merely lying down because the cabin was too low for us to sit up. Chancing to drop a box of matches in the narrow converging space between our bunks, Joe put his hand down to recover it, only to draw it back the next instant with a volley of profanity, and the startling announcement that the blankety-blank boat was full of water! It is sufficient for me to say that the *Norma*, for some unaccountable reason, had sprung a leak, and that it was only by constant pumping and bailing that we kept her afloat until we beached her in Cape Bossut Creek.

When, after a week's delay, I was able to borrow a carpenter from one of the schooners, at the low rate of thirty shillings a day, I found that my boat needed recalking and practically a new keelson. With five men to pay and feed, whether they worked or not, I felt for once, at least, that time was money, and I pushed along the repairs with all possible speed.

Joe, meanwhile, his occupation temporarily gone, had procured a case of "square-face"[1] from some vessel, and taken up his abode in a native woman's hut on the river-bank.

At the end of two weeks the *Norma* was once more ready for sea. I was anxious to be at work again, and the night the calking was finished, I told Joe to be aboard by daylight,

[1] Holland gin.

as I intended to leave the creek by the early tide. When morning came, however, he said he must have one more day to finish off his spree, and I, being helpless without a diver, was forced to submit. The second day it was the same story; he still wanted more time. I coaxed, entreated, and threatened, to no purpose; he only laughed at me and said that though I might be the owner, he, as the diver, was the "boss." It ended finally in our having a "rough-and-tumble" on the beach, during which the native woman sat in the sand afar off and howled like a dog. After it was over I washed the blood off my face in the creek and went aboard, where I hoisted the *Norma's* sails and steered for the grounds. For I was determined that, rather than be dependent upon a drunken diver, I would dive myself.

As I was now one hand short, I was obliged, first of all, to scour the fleet for another Malay. After a good deal of haggling, Smith, of the *Pigeon*, agreed to sublet me one of his Java boys, Orang, for three months, upon which I anchored the *Norma* in ten fathoms of water and prepared for my first descent.

I do not know that I have ever been placed in a sufficiently trying position to prove whether I am a coward or not, but I do know that from the time I left Cape Bossut Creek with the avowed intention of becoming a diver, until I went under water, I was constantly in

what, as school-boys, we used to call a "blue funk." Had I been in the hands of friends, or at least had a white tender, it might have been different; as it was, however, with five irresponsible, half-savage Malays in the boat, and only my own inexperience to rely upon, I was — there is no evading the fact — frightened.

The night before the event I slept little. Long before the first gray streaks of dawn began to light the sky above the sand-hills of the Ninety-mile, I had dressed myself in the heavy diving-flannels and -stockings, and was waiting nervously for day. At breakfast I followed the example of Joe, taking only a little toast and a cup of coffee, for it was said to be a bad thing to dive on a full stomach. Later, after choosing Ketchee for my tender, I proceeded, with his help, to don the ponderous diving-dress.

The rubber suit, which is coat, waistcoat, trousers, and stockings, all in one, and which one must get into through the neck, was the first article to be put on. In order that I might thrust my hands through the tight rubber wristlets of the suit, they were well soaped. A thirty-two-pound pair of leaden-soled boots were next added to my costume, then the corselet or shoulder-piece, and the seventy-pound back- and chest-weights. Ketchee now slipped the noose of the life-line round my waist, and I stepped on to the rope-

ladder hanging over the boat's side to have the air-pipe and helmet attached. As the ringing copper globe was screwed upon my shoulders, I began instinctively to take in long breaths at the still open face-glass. I did not feel quite sure that I should get any more air; the whole arrangement was unpleasantly suggestive of an hermetically sealed coffin.

"Pump away!" I shouted.

A warm stream of air, saturated with the smell of india-rubber, came whizzing in at the top of the helmet.

"Alri'?" asked Ketchee, bringing his face down to a level with mine.

I nodded.

Instantly the face-glass was clapped on, and with a few squeaking turns was screwed up. But oh that there had been a wrench with which to screw up my courage! It seemed to have sunk to the bottom of those leaden-soled boots. Though Ketchee tapped the helmet to let me know that all was clear, I made no move to let go. I wanted very much, at that moment, to be allowed to alter my mind. All the yarns of treacherous Malays, accidents, octopi, and sharks that I had ever heard suddenly became uncomfortable realities. As I hesitated, trying to think of some excuse to have the face-glass taken off again, I chanced to look up at Ketchee. He was grinning all over his yellow face at my discomfiture. That decided me; I could not stand being laughed

at by a Malay; and without more ado I grasped the plumper-line and dropped.

Splash! The water closed over me with a buzzing sound, the dress tightened about my body, and all was green. I caught sight of the bottom of the boat for an instant; then felt, as if in a dream, that I was falling. At the same time I experienced a sharp pain in my ears. It was as though two spikes were being pressed into them. The deeper I sank the harder they pressed, until I fairly yelled with agony. Down, ever down, I went into the cooler, darker water. The water gripped me tighter and tighter each moment. A shoal of fishes passed my face-glass like leaves swept up by the wind. Would my kicking feet never touch bottom? Suddenly I found myself upon my knees, with the pain in my ears gone, and immediately I scrambled to my feet, brimful of curiosity.

As the surface of the earth changes under different climatic conditions, so the bed of the ocean varies according to the latitude and depth of water. On our northern shores divers find little of interest or beauty. Stretches of blue-gray mud or ribbed sand, with an occasional bunch of sea-grass bending with the tide, as the long grass in the meadows bends to the wind, is the usual sight. Tropical waters, however, like tropical lands, are extravagant in their profusion of vegetation, life, and color.

I fear I cannot give an adequate description

of the sea-bottom common to the northern coasts of Australia. For not only is everything one sees so novel and so different from things on dry land as to make comparison impossible, but the abnormal conditions under which a diver works distort, exaggerate, and make fanciful his whole surroundings. Then, too, the scene changes greatly with the state of the tide. At springs, when the tide is running its strongest and the water "riled," I think of it only as being like the Sahara in a sand-storm—dark, fear-inspiring, and impossible to face. At such times it is necessary to go on hands and knees to find bottom. When there is less tide it resembles a smoky plain, covered with scrub, cacti, and jagged tree-stumps, all in blurred masses without form or color. During "neaps," however, when the rise and fall are scarcely perceptible, and the water clear as crystal, it is a vast, cool conservatory of tropic sea-plants and sea-flowers.

It was thus that I first saw bottom. Though the light was somewhat subdued, I could see distinctly for thirty or forty feet; beyond this, objects became out of focus, then faded into the green haze. The ground I stood upon was of coral structure, overgrown with an apparently endless variety of seaweed, coral, and sponge, which, in some cases, grew as high as my head. Sea-fans, fern-shaped corallines, sponge-cups, conches, brilliant anemones,

quaint grasses, strange blossoms, spreading coral-cups, all rich in color and beautiful in form, lay undisturbed by surface storms in this silent garden of the sea. Animation was given to the scene by many small but gay-colored fishes which flitted, hovered, and darted about the growths like gorgeous butterflies. With a certain weird, unreal beauty about it all, that reminded me at one moment of the transformation scene in a pantomime and at another of passages in the "Arabian Nights," it was the most fascinating sight I had ever seen. I began at once to fill my bag with small specimens of coral and cowries, and to examine with curious interest the many new growths about me. For the time being I forgot that I was of another world; forgot that I was an intruder in a diving-suit; and wandered on and on like one in a fantastic dream, eager only to explore and probe the mysteries of this sunless No-man's Land.

I was brought back to earth and my senses by two things. One was a signal from Ketchee asking if I was all right, and the other was the sight of an empty beer-bottle, which stood upright upon a little ledge of rock, its yellow label proclaiming to all the fish world that it was ——'s, and warning them to "beware of imitations"!

And then, for the first time, I began to realize my position. My head was aching; streams of perspiration were pouring down

my face; I felt oppressed, and, with a wide-open mouth, was gasping hard and fast for air. With this realization came an uncanny, eery feeling — a sense of fear that I had not experienced before. As I looked back and saw the length of line behind me, an indescribable loneliness took possession of me. I felt as much separated from the world as though I had been dropped upon the moon. My thoughts dwelt upon submarine monsters, and, in the smoky distance, my imagination conjured large forms approaching.

It was evident that I was becoming nervous, and had, therefore, been down long enough; so, screwing up the escape-valve in order to make myself lighter, I gave the signal to be pulled up, and in a few moments was greedily drinking in the fresh sea-air through the open face-glass. My nose and ears bled profusely at my first descent, and I spat blood for several days; but, with the exception of one terrific headache, I felt no bad effects. After I had been down three or four times, and my ears were "broken," that is, a communication opened up between them and my mouth, I had no more pain. From this time I increased the length of my stay under water daily, gradually learning how to handle the escape-valve, regulate my movements, and find pearl-shell. At the end of two weeks I was averaging one hundred pairs a day.

I now settled down to the arduous, excit-

ing, and dangerous life of the pearl-fishers. From sun-up until four o'clock in the afternoon I descended and ascended, tacked and drifted, ate sparingly, smoked much, and worked like a slave. At "knock-off" time the heavy, wearying dress was removed, and I tackled my one full meal. This usually consisted of a huge plate of fried fish, freshly caught, rice, tea, and bread and jam. When the steamer that tended the fleet anchored among us, we got a mess of fresh meat, and sometimes potatoes and onions; these, however, were rare and festive occasions. After the evening meal each man took his station for cleaning the accumulation of shells. Ketchee opened and handed them to me for examination; I, in turn, passed them to Simong, who scraped off the growths; then Ah-wong chipped them, Dola scrubbed them with coir brushes, and finally they came into Orang's hands to be stowed away. It was generally sundown before the deck was washed down and the day's work ended.

And when the sun had sunk into the sea, and with tropic suddenness put out the day; when the cool night calm had come, and the black-hulled boats had folded their wings, like a flock of sea-birds, and settled for the night; when the bright southern stars flashed out, and we sat, with glowing pipes, enjoying, as only workers can, our well-earned rest, life was indeed good upon the pearling-grounds.

Most of the divers spent their evenings in visiting one another's boats, drinking square-face, and gambling; but I was usually too tired to do more than read a little, and turn in.

A lawless, cosmopolitan set were the pearlers, without exception, the most stick-at-nothing class of men with whom I have ever cast my lot. Out of some seven or eight hundred, not more than fifty were white. The crews of the boats, with the exception of those owned by Chinese and Seymour's crowd of Port Darwin natives, were entirely Malays. Of the divers, perhaps ten per cent. were white men; the remainder mainly Kanakas, Japanese, Chinese, Manilamen, East Indians, and natives of the many islands of the Malayan Archipelago. Three hundred miles from the nearest port, and that itself on the edge of civilization; policed but once a year by the *Emu;* unrestrained by law or order — these things, with a predominance of half-savage Asiatics and an exciting calling, combined to make the pearling-grounds for me, at least, a most interesting place. Within a month I knew every one in the fleet, had made several stanch friends, and had become a fairly good diver.

Although there was no religion of any kind among the pearlers, Sunday was always made a day of rest, or, I should more properly say, a holiday. On Sunday it was safer to anchor at some distance from, rather than

among, the fleet, for not only was it a time of drunken revelry and fighting, but many of the divers passed the day firing with rifles and revolvers at floating targets, and a gin-crazed South Sea Islander or a Malay with either of these weapons is rather an erratic marksman. In the afternoon it was no uncommon thing to see a string of dinghies heading for the shore to witness the settlement of the various disputes which had occurred during the week, disputes which were sometimes ended with fists, and sometimes with knives.

At one of the fights which I attended, a wiry East Indian, called Charley Bombay, was pitted against a big Kanaka diver from Streeter's No. 10. It took place on the Ninety-mile Beach, about fifty miles to the southward of Lagrange Bay, and as a specimen of rough-and-tumble, catch-as-catch-can, go-as-you-please fighting, I certainly have never seen its equal. During the set-to they were in the water fully as much as they were on the sand. It was, in fact, an amphibious fight, in which the competitors punched, kicked, scratched, bit, butted, hugged, pulled hair, spat, threw sand, and tried to drown each other. The finish came while they were still in the water. It was brought about by the Kanaka getting a firm grip on the East Indian's windpipe and throttling him into a state of subjection. An altercation at once arose as to the fairness of the Kanaka's tactics, and

it ended in a wholesome and indiscriminate punching of heads — a free fight, from which I considered myself lucky to escape with only a bloody nose and a lumpy head.

When the spring tides were strongest we ran our boats into the nearest creek to replenish our stores of wood and water. At this time also the pearl-shell was packed in cases ready for shipment by the next Singapore steamer, repairs were made, pumps and diving-dresses overhauled, and everything put in readiness for another three weeks of diving. During these sojourns in the creeks of the coast, I had an opportunity of seeing, in their untamed state, several tribes of aborigines.

At the time of Captain Cook's discovery in 1770, Australia was thickly populated with natives. The Kamillaroy tribe alone, which he found inhabiting the shores of Sydney harbor, numbered approximately one hundred and eighty thousand. To-day not one of this famous tribe is left, and in the civilized parts of the country a blackfellow is a rarity. In the island of Tasmania, where a large tribe also existed, the last of her race, Princess Traganini, died about fifteen years ago. The few aborigines now remaining are to be found in the northern and western parts of the continent. Although they may hold their own in these comparatively unexplored regions for a time, they are nevertheless doomed to extinction.

Past experience has clearly proved that the two races cannot exist together. The occupation of the land by the European settler deprives the native of his means of subsistence, and whether he accepts the situation or fights, the result is the same. If he attacks the white man, or preys on his flocks and herds, he is shot down; and if he makes friends with the newcomer his destruction is none the less certain. For the Australia natives, when brought into contact with civilization, are too ready to imitate the vices of the Europeans; moreover, the complete change in the mode of living makes them susceptible to diseases from which, in their natural state, they are entirely free. As settlement spreads, they give way to the white man, and their complete disappearance is only a question of time. The process is identical, in fact, with that which is going on among the Hawaiian and other savage races.

The origin of the Australian aborigines is still doubtful. Some writers claim that they are of Papuan origin; others that they are descended from the African negro, and still others that they are of Arabian stock. These theories are based mainly upon the similarity of customs and superstitions. As there are more differences than resemblances, however, and little, if any, likeness in the languages, it seems more probable that, like the marsupials, they are purely Australian.

They are nomadic, and restricted only by their tribal boundaries, roam from place to place, living on animals, fish, and roots.

In appearance they are unlike the African negro in many respects. They are neither so dark, so large-framed, nor so coarse as the African. Their hair is straight or curly, but never woolly; their eyes are large, sunken, and black; and their lips thick, though not protruding. In the northern part of Westralia they wear only a plaited string of human hair round their waists, from which is hung a piece of matting or skin, or sometimes a sea-shell. The women adorn themselves by sticking balls of red clay to their front hair, and both sexes are decorated on many parts of the body with rows of hideous, raised scars. These are produced by making deep gashes with a sharp shell, and filling the wound with sand before allowing it to heal.

They cultivate nothing, have no domestic animals except the dog, dwell in rude huts of branches or bark, and seem to live like wild beasts — by instinct — rather than as human beings. I was told by one of the station-owners on the De Grey River, who had a large number of natives on his "run," that among several of the tribes to the northward it was the custom to eat every tenth child born. The native explanation for this cannibalism was that it was necessary to keep the

tribe from increasing beyond the carrying capacity of its territory. As "trackers" they are little short of marvelous, and in this way are invaluable to the Australian police. They also make good shepherds, and, if started young enough, fair naked divers. Beyond these things, however, notwithstanding all the efforts that have been made to improve them, they do not seem to progress; and I do not believe that it will be any loss to the world when the Australian blackfellow is a thing of the past.

X

WORKING UNDER WATER

FOR several years after its discovery in Australian waters, the pearl-oyster was obtained solely by means of naked divers brought from the islands of Malaysia. Later on, an enterprising coast-squatter, who had a large number of blacks on his run, tried, as an experiment, a season's fishing with young natives. He was successful; other station-owners followed his example, and in a very short time Australian natives manned every diving-schooner on the coast. The Australian did not make so good a diver as the Malay, but he cost less; hence the change. When a man takes up a section of new country in Westralia, whatever natives there may be on it are considered his property. It is true that a native cannot be lawfully employed without being "signed on" before a magistrate; but as a blackfellow will sign his death-warrant for a plug of tobacco, and as the employer has merely to agree that he will feed the blackfellow, clothe him from

the neck to the knees, and give him one blanket a year, the process of engaging a tribe or two is neither difficult nor expensive.

Unlike the naked divers of the Ceylon pearl-fisheries, the aboriginal Australians descend without the aid of a sinker or any other appendage. Their only preparation before a dive is to sit on the edge of the boat for a few moments, noisily inhaling and exhaling. When their lungs are sufficiently inflated they slip feet first into the water, turn over, and swim leisurely to the bottom. During the five hottest months, in which it is legal to use natives for this purpose, they live aboard schooners, sometimes as many as one hundred on one vessel. They do not dive from the schooners, however, but from open boats, known as dinghies, which carry from six to ten divers, and a white man in charge. The latter stands in the stern keeping a sharp lookout for his boys, and at the same time constantly shifting the position of his boat by means of a single oar — a method called sculling. Sixty feet is the extreme depth at which natives can work successfully. Though they remain under water usually from sixty to ninety seconds, many of the old hands can double this time when necessary. Under exceptionally good conditions, the best divers will get from sixty to one hundred shells a day. The average of an ordinary boat's crew, however, is probably not more than twenty.

An odd feature among the native divers is that toward the end of the season their long black hair, bleached presumably by the combined action of salt water and sun, turns a decided straw color, and makes a ludicrous contrast with their dark faces and bodies.

I once saw a schooner-load of natives leave Cossack for the grounds, and the sight was one of the most affecting I have ever witnessed. The boys had just been brought in from the back country, where they had been running wild since the previous season. Although most of them had walked two and even three hundred miles to the port, they were followed by their mothers and wives, who came to see them depart. The night before the schooner sailed, the women camped on the sand-hills, where, in unison with their own dogs and the pariahs of the township, they howled dismally until dawn. They then collected upon the beach abreast of the schooner, an ash-covered, disheveled, tear-stained crowd, and waited. Shortly after sunrise the schooner set sail. No sooner did she begin to move than the women again broke into loud lamentations, running the while along the edge of the water, so that they might keep up with the vessel. As they ran they occasionally threw up their hands, gave one long despairing cry, and dashed themselves at full length on the sand. Fleet though they were, even to the older women, the schooner soon out-

stripped them. Still they continued the uneven race, continued their wailings and their bodily punishment, until they reached the outer point, where, in a piteous muster, they stood and watched the schooner disappear.

Naked diving in Australia has now become a method of the past. This is due entirely to the introduction of dress-divers, who, with their many advantages, rapidly exhausted the supply of oysters in shallow waters. To-day pearling is carried on at depths ranging from ten to eighteen fathoms, which would be impossible without modern appliances. Not only can a man in a dress dive deeper than a man without one, but there are no restrictions, as there are with natives, in regard to the seasons. He can work, if he chooses, all the year round.

The length of time a dress-diver may remain under water is determined by several things: the nature of the work and the speed of the tide must both be considered, though it is governed mainly by the depth and consequent pressure of water. In three to five fathoms, if the work is not unusually tiring, one need not rise to the surface for one or two hours; in eighteen fathoms, however, where the slightest effort is exhausting, and even breathing hard work, ten minutes is long enough to stay down.

Pearl-diving, I think, may safely be classed among the occupations called perilous. I

certainly found it so during my brief experience. When one considers that a diver is always at the tender mercy of his Malay crew; that the slightest accident to his apparatus is apt to prove fatal; that the unnatural conditions under which he must work cause deafness, paralysis, and not rarely sudden death; that on the surface he is exposed to the cyclones of a treacherous coast, and that below he is ever dependent upon his own presence of mind, one must admit, at least, that it is not as safe as ordinary callings.

Danger from accidents is more possible than most people imagine. There are so many things about a diver's work that cannot be foreseen, there is so much uncertainty in regard to his position and the direction in which he is moving, particularly in thick water, that it is to be wondered at, indeed, that accidents are not more frequent. The breaking down or stoppage of his air-pump, the uncoupling or bursting of his air-pipe, the ripping of his dress upon sharp rocks or corals, mean, in the majority of cases, suffocation. But perhaps the most common danger of all, and one that must be constantly guarded against, is that of fouling, or getting entangled at the bottom.

The life-line and air-pipe are the means of fouling, and carelessness on the part of the tender, or pipe-holder, the cause. To understand this feeling thoroughly it should be

remembered, first, that the boat is not stationary; second, that the diver must keep up with the boat; and, third, that he cannot remain directly under the boat, but must run from side to side, backward or forward, wherever he sees or thinks he may find shell. In this way he is often some distance from his boat, with a sagging length of lines behind him, and in his erratic movements it is a very easy matter to get tied up round the base of a big coral cup or some such unbreakable growth. It is at these times that a diver needs to have his wits about him. For besides having lost the power of signaling, if he does not clear himself quickly the whole weight of the drifting boat will be brought upon the fouled lines and in all probability break them.

At certain states of wind and tide it is impossible to check the boat sufficiently with the ordinary drag. Those who persist in working at such times are often obliged to "gird up their loins" and run in order to keep pace with their boats.

My first accident happened before I had been diving three weeks. I had been working all the morning on a fairly good patch and in about ten fathoms of water. About midday, having a full bag, and preferring to take it up and get a breath of fresh air rather than to have it hauled up by the life-line, I gave the customary signal to ascend. The

life-line tautened; I was lifted from my feet and was soon being drawn jerkily toward the lighter water above. When I was within ten feet of the boat's bottom, I felt a sudden tightening under my left arm, and at the same moment my upward progress stopped. Before I realized that anything had gone wrong, the spun-yarn check, which held the air-pipe under my arm, parted, and I was pulled back head downward. Instantly all the air in the dress went into the legs, which swelled like two immense sausages and held me suspended heels up.

For the first few moments of my surprise and terror I kicked, struggled, and yelled like a madman, but all to no purpose. Though the boys were pulling with might and main on the life-line round my waist, my helmet seemed as though it were anchored to the bottom.

After I had kicked myself into a state of exhaustion and common sense, I reasoned out the cause of my dilemma. It was evident that the air-pipe was fast below. I began at once to try and make the boys understand that I wanted them to lower me. All my shakes and jerks, however, were ineffectual; they obstinately held the line as taut as they were able, making a violent effort every few minutes to pull me in halves. Luckily all my gear was in good shape, or they would have accomplished it. They had sense enough at

last, however, to signal for help, and after I had hung betwixt the top and the bottom for about half an hour, my air-pipe was released by another diver, and I was pulled up, thankful to get my feet down to their proper level again.

Had there been a strong tide or much wind at the time of this mishap, the weight of the boat, which was practically anchored by the air-pipe, must have broken it, and the ending might have been different. The accident was caused by the careless pipe-holder, who, instead of keeping the tubing tight, allowed it to drop on the bottom and coil round the base of a coral growth.

At another time I got entangled below by my own carelessness, and then it was only my experience that saved me. This time there was a strong tide running, and I was perforce traveling over the ground at a half-run. I could not lessen the speed of the boat, because the bottom was so encumbered with marine growths that the drag, if lowered much, would catch and anchor her. Intent upon my search, I forgot for the moment my lines. Suddenly I was brought to a standstill. I saw that my life-line had hooked round a mass of sponge, and ran back hurriedly to clear it. Before I reached it, however, I was again checked by the tightening of the pipe, and, turning, I found that it too had fouled in a similar way. The tide was so swift that

although the boys were paying out on both lines with all speed, supposing that I was stopping to pick up shells, I was unable to get enough slack on either of them to move a foot.

Immediately I perceived my danger. In a minute or so the end of both pipe- and life-line would be reached; the whole weight of the tide-driven boat would come upon them, and they would either part, or, as they were pulling in different directions, wrench the helmet from my shoulders. There was no time for thought. I must act, and that at once.

I saw that my only hope was to cut one or the other of the lines. But which? If I cut the life-line my sure means of reaching the surface was gone, for tubing is not to be depended on to haul up a heavy diver. If, on the other hand, I cut the pipe, my supply of air would cease. I decided, however, to sacrifice the latter, and trust to there being enough air left in the dress to last me until I was pulled up.

Hastily snatching at the life-line, I managed to jerk out a signal for more air. As it was answered by a rally on the pump, I screwed up the escape-valve to keep all the air possible in the dress, and, slipping out my sheath-knife, I waited with a trembling hand for the right moment to cut. That wait was the most anxious moment of my life. My

heart beat like a trip-hammer, sweat poured down my face in blinding streams, and I shook all over as with ague. To this day the thought of it agitates me and makes me breathe faster, for it is no light thing to cut off one's supply of air in eighty feet of water. Tighter grew the lines, and tighter, till they cracked with tension. I imagined I felt myself being pulled apart; yet I delayed. I wanted more air in the dress.

At last I braced myself, hacked the stretching pipe in two, scrambled round the sponge mass where the life-line was caught, and ran toward the boat, signaling and crying, "Pull up! Pull up!" The signal was bravely answered, and I began to ascend. Before I reached the top, however, I lost consciousness. The boys told me afterward that I was black in the face from suffocation when they finally landed me on deck.

The quality that a diver needs more than any other is presence of mind. Unless a man possesses this, he should never enter a diving-suit. A good illustration of the fact that all men are not born to be divers came into my experience while aboard the *Norma*.

Wishing for the companionship of a white man, I engaged for my tender one of the left-overs from the now abandoned gold-fields, a young Scotchman named Rob. He was a year older than I, a six-footer, and an unusually fine specimen of a man. Rob, of

course, had a sweetheart "at home," and his one aim in life was to make enough money to return and marry her. As divers' wages were high, he was very anxious to get some experience under water, and I promised to put him down the first slack day. When that day arrived, with a few parting injunctions from me as the face-glass was put on, down he went. I felt him land on the bottom, and signal that he was all right. He began to walk away from the boat at once, soon running out most of the lines. I was not alarmed, however, for we were at anchor, and it was slack water. On the contrary, in fact, I thought he was doing remarkably well. He stopped after a time, and I imagined him resting, as I had done the first time, and taking it all in. All at once a dark, bladder-like object, floating at some distance from the boat, caught my eye. For a moment I thought it was a turtle, but, as I examined it more closely, I recognized a familiar patch, and began to haul in on the life-line as fast as possible. Rob had come up stern first. As we drew him nearer we could hear him screaming his very loudest inside the swollen dress. We soon got him alongside, unscrewed the escape-valve, and hauled him on deck; but even then he continued to cry at intervals, "Let me up!"

When he came to his right senses I learned that he had become frightened lest the dress should burst, and had screwed the escape-

valve the wrong way, thus keeping in the air instead of letting it out. Then, losing his presence of mind altogether, he had fallen down; the air had immediately accumulated in the bulkiest part of the dress, and floated him ungracefully to the surface.

Rob's second attempt, about a week later, nearly cost him his life. Notwithstanding his previous experience, he made the same mistake with the escape-valve, and, becoming crazed with fear, began to unscrew the face-glass. Fortunately for him, his sweetheart, and my apparatus, he lost consciousness before he got it off. He was delirious for several hours after we hauled him up. When he came to his right mind again, we decided that he was not fitted for a diver, and that his fortune would have to be made in some other way.

Dangers from sharks, octopi, and other fish are more imaginary than real; that is, so far as the dress-diver is concerned. Although native divers not infrequently fall victims to the tiger of the sea, I have never heard of a man in a dress being attacked. In spite of this knowledge, I cannot truthfully say that I ever saw a shark, even a little one, without being frightened. Often I have turned tail and run for dear life at the sight of a large fish which I fancied might be a shark; and I shall never forget the feeling that came over me when, for the first time, I found myself in close quarters with one of these monsters.

Before I saw anything, I felt, instinctively, a strange presence. This was brought about, doubtless, by the fact that the small fish, which are plentiful on good shelling-ground, had all disappeared. The absence of these flitting little companions, when one is accustomed to them, makes the bottom seem intensely still. A sense of impending danger took possession of me; I looked apprehensively out of my side-glasses, and stood terror-stricken. Within ten feet of me, half hidden by a mass of cobweb corallines, was the bulk of an immense shark. It appeared to be about twenty-five feet long, and though I knew its size was greatly exaggerated by the face-glass, the sight was none the less alarming. The creature evidently had not perceived me. Save for a slight trembling of its side-fins, it lay motionless.

My first thought was to give the signal to ascend. As fish, however, have human nature enough to want a thing as soon as they see it being taken away, I promptly rejected the idea, and, lest my bare hands should attract the man-eating propensity that sharks are supposed to have, I hid them under my chest-weight. A sweep of its tail, and the great fish and I were face to face. Not daring to move, I stood like an image, my heart beating wildly, and my eyes riveted on its cavernous mouth. I felt that the shark was inspecting me curiously, as though I were

some new kind of fish. After a few moments I became aware that, by an almost imperceptible motion of its flexible tail, it was gradually approaching me. Nearer and nearer came the leviathan, the shovel-shaped nose pointing directly to my face-glass, the gleaming under part now plainly visible. Flesh and blood could stand it no longer. With a yell I threw up my arms. Instantly there was a swirl of water, a cloud of mud, and my enemy vanished.

A quick movement on the part of a diver is sufficient to frighten away the largest of the finny tribe. If he keeps still for any length of time he is quickly surrounded by an admiring fish crowd, opening their eyes and mouths like curious countrymen. One wave of the hand, however, and with a flourish of tails they are gone.

Fishing from the bottom is one of the favorite sports of the pearl-fishers. Leaving one end of the fishing-line in charge of one of the boys, the diver descends with a hook baited with a piece of red rag, and conceals himself among the growths. Instead of dropping his hook after the usual manner of fishermen, he floats it by means of a large cork a few feet above his head. If a shark or any other objectionable fish heave in sight, he hauls down his colors in double-quick time. If, on the contrary, it be a snapper, a rock-cod, or a jewfish, he screws his valve up a

minute, so that the bubbles may not frighten the fish, and holds the line with both hands. As soon as the fish has the bait fairly in its mouth, a sharp pull hooks it, and a signal to the boy above sends it struggling to the surface. A jewfish takes the bait with a dash, but goes up quietly. A rock-cod, on the other hand, calmly opens its enormous mouth and sucks in the bait, and often the float as well, with the utmost *sang-froid.* When hooked, it opens its naturally large eyes wider than ever, seems to swell itself up with indignation, and, as if it realized that something must be done, rushes wildly in all directions.

The best catch on the grounds, however, is the turtle. Most pearling-localities abound in them, and no diver loses an opportunity to secure a supply of fresh meat. Turtle-catching under water is great fun, and none the worse for having a spice of danger in it. For, in his element, the turtle is an unwieldy fellow to handle; he has, moreover, a beak powerful enough to bite through a pearl-shell. Though the usual weight of turtles in these waters is about one hundred and fifty pounds, they sometimes run up to four hundred pounds.

I had quite an experience with my first turtle. I was told that catching one was a very simple matter: all I had to do was to approach the animal from behind, spring on its back, grasp the edges of the shell with both hands,

lift it quickly to my chest, and give the signal to ascend. "Then," said my instructor, "you 'll have the beggar's nose pointed up-'ard, and as long as you hold him that way, he can only go up'ard. D 'ye see? And what with his flippin' and the tender's haulin', you 'll be on top pretty quick."

For some time I could not get near one. They invariably sighted me first, and rose, and flipped away like great birds. But my opportunity came at last. While working against the tide one morning, I sighted a big fellow feeding among some sea-grass ahead of me. Coming up behind him as quietly as my leaden-soled boots would allow, I found my quarry rather larger than I anticipated. From the quantity of barnacles and grass upon his back, moreover, it was evident that he was an "old bird," and would not prove very good eating. Notwithstanding these things, however, I determined not to be cheated out of my fun, and, as soon as I was within reach, I jumped and landed on his back. In the excitement of the moment, I suppose I must have fumbled. I was too slow, certainly, in getting my fingers under his shell; for, before I realized it, or had a chance to raise the creature, I felt my feet dragging over the bottom, and awoke to the fact that my intended captive had captured me and was swimming away with me. In vain I tried to point the turtle's head upward.

He would have none of it. I attempted to catch something with my toes, but was too late. He was already fairly under way, and traveling at his very best gait. As I feared to drop, and could not signal, there was nothing for me to do but hang on, and act as the tail to Mr. Turtle's kite. Before I had time to appreciate what a novel ride I was having, we came to the end of our tether — the limit of the life-line. With a sudden jerk we parted company. I fell headlong down, landing, by good fortune, on a soft bottom, and the turtle, I am inclined to believe, is going still.

In Westralian waters crawfish also are plentiful, though not easily caught; likewise handsome yellow-and-black sea-snakes with flat tails, stingarees or sting-rays, tridacnæ (the largest of all mollusks), dugong, and innumerable crabs. The only fish that can truthfully be called an enemy of the diver is known as the stone-fish. As divers are seldom, if ever, bitten by the stone-fish except when picking up a shell, it is probable that this spiteful little member of the finny tribe makes its habitation near or under the pearl-oyster. The only time I was bitten the pain was such that I dropped my bag of shells and hastened to the surface. Even in this short time my hand and arm had so swelled that it was with difficulty I could get the dress off, and for three days I suffered intensely. I learned afterward that in coming

up I had done the worst possible thing; that had I stayed below for an hour or two after the bite, I should not have had any further discomfort, as the pressure would have caused the wound to bleed freely, and thus have expelled the poison.

With all its beauty, its life, and its fascination, the bottom of the sea, from my point of view, is the loneliest place on earth. I have been "bushed" in the Australian desert, have wandered alone in the bowels of a north-country coal-mine, have been adrift in mid-ocean, yet never have I felt such complete isolation, such uncanny solitude, as when working under a few fathoms of water. Removed from any actual communication with other human beings, in a vast, strange world in which every form is so different from earthly conditions that it seems unnatural, existing under an abnormally high pressure, which in itself alters the aspect of things, the sense of loneliness is at times awful. Above water a timid man may keep up his spirits by a lively whistle; in a diving-dress, however, this is not possible. To be sure, a diver may hum or sing if he will; but it takes too much breath, and in the end he settles down to listening to the distant thump of the air-pump. I believe that most divers get into the habit of talking to themselves, and I am sure that all of them swear.

For one of the peculiar effects of diving is

that it makes one bad-tempered. As the irritability passes away as soon as one is drawn up, it is only reasonable to suppose that it is caused by the unusual pressure of air inside the dress, though in what particular way it acts I cannot say. My experience, and that of other divers whom I have questioned, is that the merest trifle may make one furious. There is always something wrong. The lines are held too tight or too slack, or there is too much air in the dress, or too little, or the boat is drifting too fast, or shells are not plentiful enough, or the dress is leaking, or the face-glass is not clean, and so forth. I have occasionally become so angry at some imaginary trouble that I have given the signal to be pulled up with the express intention of "licking" every Malay in the boat. As I neared the surface, however, and the pressure decreased, my fighting spirit would gradually wane, and by the time the face-glass was unscrewed I would be so ridiculously good-natured as to forget entirely my errand.

Perhaps the most annoying thing that can happen to a diver is to find that he has been screwed up with a lively fly or cockroach. It is bad enough for his nose to itch and he be unable to scratch it, or for him to get something in his eye and not be allowed to take it out; but when an insect begins to crawl deliberately over his face, play hide-and-seek up his nostrils, and explore his ears, it is simply

maddening. It is useless for him to butt the face-glass, make hideous faces, or indulge in profanity. The only remedy is to be pulled up.

Of the many scares I received while working below, there is one that I must not pass, because of its absurdity. It was one of the muddy days, and everything, in consequence, was blurred and exaggerated. In the yellow, fog-like distance I saw the loom of an immense dark object moving slowly toward me. I stood and watched it, frightened, yet curious. As it came nearer I made out a central body with several great arms or feelers waving about it. My heart was in my mouth in a moment, for I felt sure it was an octopus. I was just about to stir up the mud at my feet in order that I might not be seen, when I discovered that my fright was caused by nothing more alarming than a fellow-diver, whose arms, legs, and lines I had imagined feelers.

A shadowy giant about twelve feet high, with huge hands, and a head like a small barrel, approached me. He walked slowly, his heavy boots raising the mud behind him like a cloud of dust, and his great central eye gleaming darkly. Although I knew him to be a man, it was with difficulty I refrained from taking to my heels. At sight of me, he, too, was startled. He quickly recovered, however, and we shook hands. I looked into

his face-glass and recognized the smiling features of Japanese Charley. Then we nodded, grinned, showed each other the state of our bags, and parted. This was the only time I ever met a man under water.

After the novelty had worn off, I settled down to the business of pearl-diving in earnest. I took pride in being the first man down in the morning and the last one up at night. I worked in all weathers, lived economically, and gave my whole attention to the accumulation of pearls and pearl-shell. I no longer saw the beauties of the bottom, or wasted my time examining strange growths and hunting for cowries, but crowded into each day as much work as possible. As I became more experienced, I found more shells. My daily average ran up to one hundred and fifty pairs, and one day I sent up three hundred and ten. Six weeks after I began to dive I shipped my first lot of shells to the London market. When the bank through which the shipment was made informed me that I could draw upon them to the extent of one hundred pounds per ton, I felt that the fortune which I had set out to make in Australia was at last in sight. From the proceeds of shells alone I calculated that in three years I should be independent. And I might find a "Southern Cross"[1] any day. Who could tell?

[1] The most famous pearl found in Westralian waters, valued at fifty thousand dollars.

XI

CAUGHT IN A CYCLONE

IT was the early part of November. The cyclone season was approaching, and every man in the fleet was looking forward to the two or three months' rest and recreation which lay before him; for in "willy-nilly time," as the natives call it, diving was suspended. A few of the divers had planned to run their boats far up the creeks during the stormy term, but most were bound for Cossack and for a taste of civilization.

We were all anchored a little to the southward of Cape Bossut, where a new patch had kept us busy for a fortnight, waiting for the Singapore steamer. Six weeks had elapsed since she had passed through the fleet on her way north, and we were short of provisions and overloaded with shell. A good ending to a good season had put the pearlers in excellent humor. All hands were like school-boys on the eve of breaking up for the holidays, and as soon as the overdue *Cockatoo* arrived, there promised to be fun.

Among my friends on the grounds was a Captain Blake, of the schooner *Dolphin*. He was the owner of a fleet of five luggers, a successful man, and, strange to say, a gentleman. Like most of the white men on the coast, Blake had a "past." That, however, did not concern me; he was a good fellow, a marvelous story-teller, and he kept a certain brand of Scotch whisky which I have not yet seen equaled. On the pearling-grounds any one of these things was enough to make a man popular. Blake was perhaps forty-five years old, tall, spare, and with iron-gray hair and mustache — a man who, in spite of his yellow, East Indian complexion and somewhat dissipated look, was still handsome.

While we were waiting for the *Cockatoo*, I spent most of my evenings aboard Blake's hospitable schooner. I usually sculled back to my own boat about ten o'clock, but one night I got caught. It came on to blow from the eastward. Unprotected as we were, a choppy sea rose at once, and, as the night was unusually dark and my dinghy but a cockleshell, I decided to remain aboard the *Dolphin* for the night. We sat up talking and smoking until late. Then Blake lent me a suit of his pajamas, and we turned in. James, Blake's mate, being in Lagrange Bay repairing one of the luggers, I took his bunk. There was nothing alarming about the situation, and I soon fell asleep.

Crack! Rattle! Bing!

The last sound rang and reverberated through the schooner's timbers like the stroke of a bell.

Awakened by these unusual sounds, the captain and I instantly sat bolt upright in our bunks. We looked at each other inquiringly, and listened. The sides of the vessel were hissing softly, and through the open companionway came the flutter of ill-stowed canvas and the hum of much wind. Yet the schooner was quiet — strangely so.

"Chain parted, eh, captain?" I said, leaping to the deck.

"Yes, curse it; that 's the third this season," he replied, following suit. "Here, you know your way about, boy. Run up and let go the heavy-weather anchor. It must be a pretty stiff squall."

As he spoke, a gust of cold, damp air descended the hatchway, and drove from the cabin its previous mugginess. The sound of hissing at the vessel's side changed to a series of little spats, and she began to roll.

"Broadside on," said the captain, as I jumped for the ladder.

Routing out the Malay crew, I cut the lashings of the great iron mud-hook, and fell to prying it from its chocks.

"Heave!" cried Orang, the Manila boatswain. "Heave and sink her! Heave!"

There was a splash, the rusty roar of

eighteen fathoms of cable tearing through the hawse-pipe, then a lull. The heavy-weather anchor had found bottom.

Snubbed short, like a down-stream trout when fairly hooked, the schooner flung her stern round, and faced the eye of the wind with a new tune in her rigging. For she no longer went peaceably with her enemy, but stopped and defied him. She laid her nose down closer to the water, and all her ropes, from the double-bass forestay to the shrill-piping signal-halyards, joined in a song of insolence.

After I had paid out cable to the forty-fathom mark, and seen that everything was shipshape forward, I went aft again. On the top steps of the cabin I paused and scanned the horizon. It was a wicked-looking night. The sky was low, and like black wool. The sea, too, was black, all but the snarling crests of the waves; and they, by contrast, were a ghastly white. Up to windward the masts of the fleet were outlined against the lighter tone of the sand-hills, over which the wind came down in fast, fierce puffs. Two luggers, with a foot or two of sail showing, were trying to beat their way into the creek beyond the cape. It was a futile attempt, however, as they were being blown bodily to leeward. Among the crowd of boats ahead I tried in vain to distinguish the *Norma*. I felt that it was fortunate she was anchored

close inshore and was well supplied with chains and anchors.

Descending into the cabin, I found the captain standing on the settee, examining the barometer.

"Falling, Blake?" I inquired.

"Fast," he answered, with a grave face. "How does it look on deck?"

"Pretty bad," I admitted. "It 's more than a cockeyed bob,[1] I 'm afraid."

"Yes, by the look of things, we are in for an easterly blow, if not worse."

"Surely it could not be a cyclone at this time, could it?" I asked.

"According to general belief, it 's a month too early for a willy-nilly," said the captain; "but as that is based upon the statements of a lot of —— niggers, I don't know whether we can depend on it or not."

I wished then that I had remained aboard my own boat. Malays were poor heavy-weather sailors; and the *Norma*, moreover, was deeply laden. I knew that the chances of there being a great storm were in our favor, yet I was fearful for the *Norma's* safety.

Returning from a visit to the deck, the skipper said: "You 'd better turn in and get some sleep. As long as James is away, I 'll have to press you into service. I will take the first watch, and you can relieve me. Orang is standing by, forward."

[1] Westralian for squall.

Accustomed, by my sea-service, to obeying orders, I vaulted into my bunk, turned my face from the lamp, and went to sleep. I was too restless, however, to remain so long. Within an hour I was wide awake again. The captain, with an unlighted cigar between his teeth, was seated in full view of the barometer. Though his face was calm and his attitude easy, I could tell by his eyes that he was listening — that he was expecting something.

By this time the shrouds were pitching their song in a higher key, the waves had changed their snarl to a sullen roar, the schooner creaked and groaned, and her cable twanged like a harpstring.

Of a sudden, a strange rumbling noise vibrated through the vessel, and she trembled from stem to stern. It lasted for about three seconds, then stopped; then continued at short intervals. She was dragging her anchor.

The captain sprang up the companionway and hurried forward. I could hear his voice shouting orders to the crew, and later a prolonged rattle of cable. With ninety fathoms of chain out, the rumbling ceased. Blake came down the cabin steps, muttering. He lighted a fresh cigar and returned to his chair to listen.

Louder and louder waxed the sounds of the approaching storm. The *Dolphin* leaped and dived and tugged at her chain, as a great fish might. She thrashed the sea with her stanch

bluff bow, till she rose in an acre of foam. Gust after gust in quick succession swept down upon her from the sand-hills, and she crouched before their fierce onslaught. The scroll-like waves were making deeper, darker hollows. She tried in vain to bound from one ridge to another. The captain began to pull on a suit of oilskins. Jamming his sou'wester on his head, he looked again at the barometer, and then turned toward my bunk.

"I 'm awake, Blake," I said. "Time to turn out?"

"Yes," he replied. "There will be work for us unless I am mistaken. James's oilskins and sea-boots are under the bunk. I 'm going on deck."

His tall form had hardly disappeared through the black square of the hatchway when, above the clamor of the elements, there rang out a deep-toned "Clang!" The cable had parted again.

As I tumbled out, I heard a rush of bare feet overhead, the rapid flinging down of coiled ropes upon the deck, and Blake bellowing like a bull. Without looking for more clothes, I scrambled up the ladder, to find the hands taking a double reef in the mainsail, preparatory to hoisting. The foretopmast staysail had already been set, and the schooner was scudding before the wind.

Feeling my way aft to the captain, I shouted: "What are you going to do — run?"

"Aye, there's nothing for it but to run now," he answered. "You had better take the wheel. That shaking orang-outang there is giving her eight points each way."

Going behind the Malay, I laid hold of the spokes, and soon had the yawing schooner steadied. Since she was merely running before the wind, without a set course, no compass was needed, and I steered by the "feel" of the wind at my back. No sooner was the mainsail on her than the *Dolphin* took wings anew, and flew over the seething seas as though she were alive to the impending danger. I thought of my little lugger and wondered how she fared. But my forebodings in regard to the *Norma* were but momentary.

The noise, the speed of the vessel, and the great amount of air exhilarated me beyond measure. I was brimming over with strength, with laughter, with daring. Hatless, shoeless, and with my pajamas fast blowing to rags, I felt no discomfort, but only a sense of power and exultation. I talked to the vessel as I steered, praised her extravagantly when she slipped away from the fast following waves, swore at her when she answered the helm slowly, and sang between times at the top of my voice. I was, indeed, intoxicated.

Dawn broke with a hurrying, tattered sky and a rising sea. The great breath which had so suddenly come upon the peaceful fleet now backed into the northeast, and momentarily

grew in strength. Frequent rain-squalls, in narrow black lines, rose from the vague horizon, and, outstripping the upper clouds, flew swiftly across their ashen-hued faces, and deluged the racing schooner.

By the time the hatches were battened down with double tarpaulins, extra gaskets had been passed round the furled sails, the water-casks and other movables had been stowed below, and all preparations made for a gale.

About six o'clock I was relieved by Orang. All hands drank their coffee on deck, for the weather looked still more threatening. The closed arch of the heavens was becoming darker and darker. The gathering of dense cloud masses in the northeast was spreading fanwise across the sky, lowering the dome, and having the appearance of great black brush-marks upon a gray canvas. On they came, until all the sky was lined with straight, sooty smudges. Then they joined, and gradually formed a solid roof of darkness. It was an eclipse, depressing, ominous.

Suddenly, out of the sky immediately overhead, there came a blinding flash and a terrific thunderclap. A shock was felt by every soul aboard. The dog forward howled dismally, the Malays set up a wail to Allah, and the schooner's maintopmast fell in splinters about her deck.

Blake and I, who were standing together

under the lee of the poop, looked at each other with blanched faces.

"That makes a man think there is a God," said the captain.

The tempest fell upon us then in all its fury. There was a continuous crash of thunder, a ceaseless blaze of lightning; and the wind swept over the boiling sea with shrieks of blind destruction. At the first gust, the few yards of canvas on the vessel left the bolt-ropes, and flapped away like birds to leeward. A heavy, slanting rain, which stung like whip-lashes, came with the new wind; and clouds of salt smoke, blown from the ruffled backs of the monster waves, befogged everything and drew the horizon close about us.

Faster and faster flew the *Dolphin* before the wrath of the storm. Her speed was slow, however, when compared with that of the clouds, the waves, or the wind. Unless one looked at her swirling wake, indeed, one might have thought her without headway, so easily did the waves overtake and pass her. At one moment she trembled in a dark valley before the onward rush of a white-streaked, slaty-hued mountain; at another she was riding buoyantly on its foaming crest; again, the mountain fell away, and she slid down into a valley.

And as the wildness of the gale increased, so did the tumult of it grow louder and louder. The rain and the salt spray hissed in unison;

the wind whirred, whistled, howled, and shrieked; the clouds opened their ports and cannonaded incessantly; and the ocean gave tongue in one long, magnificent roar. Added to these the chief chords of the storm symphony were many minor strains — strange mutterings, and the voices of the sea. Wind, wave, and sky had combined their uproar, and the result was a deafening clamor. It was fearful; we looked at one another with eyes that asked, How will it all end?

The morning wore on. Still the storm grew more and more furious. To stand and watch the towering, angry ridges that ever rose astern; to see them come rushing after the little schooner, each one threatening to engulf her; to hear them roaring as they came; to feel the sting of their salt spray as they went boiling along the top rail — these were things, indeed, to make the stoutest heart quake. Although we had set a storm-trysail, and the *Dolphin* ran before it like a frightened thing, we could no longer escape the sea. We had been expecting it for some time. It came at last. One frightful billow, higher, fiercer, hoarier than the others, reared itself above the stern. The schooner hung a moment in the shadowy abyss before it. Then she rose quickly toward the raging crest. But too late. It toppled with a crash over the heads of the men at the wheel, and swept her like an avalanche.

We were all carried forward with the rush of water. I found myself swimming abaft the forecastle-head. The deck was filled to the rails, and the vessel seemed to be sinking. She rose, however, gave a few quick rolls, like a big dog shaking himself, spilled the greater part of her weighty burden, and hurried on again.

Looking aft, I saw the wheel spinning madly. The steersman had been washed away. I yelled at one of the Malays to follow me, and clawed my way to the poop. When I reached it, the schooner was almost broadside on. Luckily the succeeding waves were not so large, or she must then and there have foundered.

The captain, pale and trembling, limped to my side a few minutes later. He had been hurt; his leg had been badly wrenched, blood was streaming from a gash in his temple, and he feared several of his ribs were broken.

As it was evidently unsafe to try to keep the *Dolphin* before it any longer, we decided, dangerous as it was in such a sea, to heave her to. The crew, in the meantime, had fled below, and it was only by force that the brave little Manila boatswain and I routed them on deck again. After we had hauled aft the sheet of the trysail, all hands were ordered into the main-rigging. Then, waiting for the right moment, I jammed the wheel over, shipped a becket over one of the spokes so

as to hold it, and sprang aloft with the others.

It was a wind-blown, fearful little crowd that clung in the schooner's rigging that day waiting for her to come round. As I watched the *Dolphin's* nose swing, and saw the great gray combers lift high their foaming crests abeam, I appreciated for the first time in my life how risky a thing it was to heave to in a big sea. One, two, three of the mountains the *Dolphin* passed in safety; the fourth leaped her rail amidships and buried her. I heard the thundering of tons upon tons of green water falling on her decks; I felt her tremble and settle beneath us; I looked down upon a white waste of water, and I said in my heart, She is gone! But it was not so. She had only caught the thin top of the wave, after all, and though its weight and force had leveled the bulwarks to the deck on both sides, this very thing enabled her to rid herself quickly of water. A few moments more and she thrashed her spars to windward, screaming like a fiend. She had accomplished her task in safety.

Although the vessel now lay over until the water reached her hatch-coamings, and in spite of her frightful pitchings, lurchings, and the stinging, hail-like spray that flew continually over the weather bow, we all felt much relieved at the change; for under the new conditions she behaved beautifully, riding

buoyantly over the ever-advancing ranges, and shipping few seas.

About noon the sky lightened, and the wind went down somewhat. We rejoiced in the hope that the gale had spent itself. Vain hopes; vain rejoicings: in less than half an hour the wind flew round suddenly to the northwest, and blew harder than ever. The storm-trysail disappeared at the first puff. Even under bare poles, however, the schooner careened at such an angle that we feared she would capsize. Four o'clock came, and still the gale grew and grew. The waves, their crests lashed into fury, rose higher yet; and the troughs between were valleys of terror.

The captain and I, meanwhile, had established ourselves abaft the high cabin skylight, where we were sheltered from the wind and yet could keep a lookout. Blake, poor fellow, was suffering so intensely from his side that he was obliged to lie down. I tried to induce him to go below, but he would not. Seeing that he had made up his mind to remain on deck, I passed the bight of a rope under his arms, and nailed a piece of wood at his feet, so that he might not slip to leeward. From time to time I made a trip into the cabin to examine the barometer, which continued to fall. No one, fortunately, was needed at the wheel. As long as it was lashed hard down, the schooner steered herself. With the exception of morning coffee,

we had eaten nothing all day. The excess of wind, moreover, and the constant strain we had been under for fourteen hours, were most exhausting. Our troubles, too, were increased by the discovery that the schooner had three feet of water in her hold. Although, owing to the unusual straining of the vessel, this was not altogether unexpected, the knowledge gave us some alarm, for the Malay crew had lost their courage and become ungovernable. Like a lot of frightened sheep, shivering and wild-looking, I found them huddled in the galley. Ketchong stood outside, under the lee of the same little structure, with an expression of disgust upon his broad yellow face. He showed his white teeth when I told him to get the men at the pumps. For a minute, perhaps, he stood at the galley door yelling. Then, no one coming forth, he drew his sheath-knife and dived into the dark interior. Fearing trouble, I laid hold of a belaying-pin, and waited.

A series of howls issued from the cook-house door; there were sounds of a fierce struggle going on inside; then, like sheep chased by a fierce collie, the crew pressed out on deck. Ketchong, grinning horribly and still prodding the laggards with his pointed blade, followed closely at their heels, and between us we drove them to the pumps. But we could not make them work satisfactorily. Not only was the slant of the

schooner's deck against us, but fear seemed to have driven the men's strength away, and at every wave that broke over us they dropped the handle-bars and fled. We gave it up at last, and I went aft to the captain again.

Night was approaching, and the situation showed no signs of improvement. The seas broke over the little vessel more and more, and with every gust she heeled dangerously.

Blake looked up at me as I stood clinging to the skylight beside him. "How does it look now?" he asked.

"No better, I 'm afraid," I admitted. "We 've got to lighten her somehow."

He groaned. He knew what I meant, but the *Dolphin's* sticks were dear to him. He said, however, after a pause: "Well, go ahead, old man. Cut away if you must."

"It 's safest," I replied; and I started forward.

As I reached the weather rail of the poop, I ducked involuntarily. A high, dark wall of water was approaching, which I felt we could not escape. I had scarce time to call "Hold on, Blake!" when it fell upon us with a dull crash. We were half drowned by the flood that rushed over us. I rose to my feet, gasping.

Sliding down to the skylight to assure myself that the captain was safe, I heard above the din a faint cry; and at the same instant I saw the galley, with half a dozen black heads

about it, floating alongside. Under the weight of water, the wire lashing which had secured the galley to the deck had parted, and the whole house, occupants included, had slid down to the railless side, overboard. I rushed to the lee side, and threw several ropes toward them. But all fell short. Dazed, helpless, horrified, I stood and watched them drift away, beheld them writhing like a mass of black snakes amid the foam of the next wave-top, and saw the edge of the galley rise on the back of another. Then they vanished, swallowed up in the grayness of the evening and the smoke and smother of the storm.

The sea again broke heavily upon the *Dolphin's* deck. I realized that no time was to be lost; and, watching my opportunity, I made a dash forward. In the boatswain's locker, under the forecastle-head, I found the ax. It was not very sharp, and I wondered whether it would serve.

Even at that moment, when the gale was screeching overhead, and death seemed so near, I was proud of my task. For years I had read and been told of blows in which it was necessary to cut away the masts; in my sea-training I had been instructed how it should be done, and, now that this thing had actually come into my experience, I felt rather vain, and said to myself that I must do it in a seamanlike manner.

Down in the lee scuppers, always up to my

waist in water, and often overhead, I hacked away at the slack forerigging. It cut more easily than I had expected. Shrouds and backstays were soon flying to leeward. Next I "ringed" the foremast as high as I could reach, for I hoped to rig a jury-mast on the stump later. Then I tackled the weather rigging. The taut wire ropes parted like threads at the first blow. When but two of the shrouds were left standing, there came a fierce squall upon us. Instantly the remaining splices drew, and the foremast, with a mighty crack and splintering, toppled overboard. When, in addition to this, the jib-boom went of its own accord, the schooner righted perceptibly.

With only her main lower mast standing, the *Dolphin* made comparatively fair weather of it, and for a time I was tempted to let her go as she was. The remembrance, however, that Blake and I were now alone, that the vessel had an unusual amount of water in her hold, and that the night was before us, decided me to continue my work. I therefore laid low the remaining mast.

After this my strength seemed to leave me. I trembled all over, and with difficulty dragged myself aft. Reaching Blake's side, I dropped on the wet deck beside him, and hooking my arm through the bight of his rope, slept the sleep of exhaustion. Once or twice I half awakened and edged closer to Blake for warmth, but I was not brought to full con-

sciousness for six hours, when Blake's voice in my ear caused me to rouse with a start.

The gale was still howling furiously, a heavy rain was falling, and the night was intensely dark. Both the captain's teeth and mine were chattering, for it had grown very cold. Blake, who was faint from fasting, wanted me to go down into the cabin for a bottle of brandy, which, he told me, was stowed in one of the lockers. Now thoroughly awake, I discovered that I, too, was ravenously hungry, and gladly went below.

Feeling my way to the hatchway, I cautiously let myself down into the warm, stuffy atmosphere of the cabin. It was pitch-dark, and everything was awash. Chests, stools, clothes, bedding, crockery, all had been flung upon the deck, where they swished and smashed from side to side. The swinging lamp, and the telltale compass, that had hung above the table, were both broken; and the weather side of the skylight was stove in so that a cataract of water poured down at every sea. The barometer only was intact, and that, I noted, by the light of a match, had ceased to fall. It was a good sign, and I yelled the news to Blake with a feeling of extravagant joy. In the darkness and the confusion into which the lockers had been thrown, I failed to find the brandy. I laid hold of some bottled ale, however, and two tins of sardines, and with these I ascended to the poop.

Lashed up to windward, under the lee of the low rail, we sat and ate our midnight meal. We knocked off the necks of the bottles with a sheath-knife and opened the sardines with the same instrument. We used our fingers to eat with, and drank from the jagged edges of the bottles. The ale was warm and bitter, but it made us feel more comfortable when it was down; and when we had finished we took a few more turns round our bodies with the ropes, and curling down together, fell asleep. We had reached that point where we really did not care what happened. We ached for a little warmth, a little comfort, a little rest.

The schooner, meanwhile, kept to the wind by the flying rags of the stowed sails, ascended the heights, slid down into the gullies, and rode on into the blackness of the awful night.

At about four o'clock we were awake again. The barometer was rising, the sky was broken and lighter in patches, and the wind seemed to have abated somewhat. We shook hands, and laughed childishly over these signs of a dying storm. Ale and some half-soaked biscuits served for our breakfast, after which I bound Blake's side and leg with strips of blanket soaked in liniment. Though the unceasing motion of the vessel must have kept him in constant pain, the brave fellow never complained.

Seated close up under the weather bulwarks, with our backs against the stanchions, we waited hopefully for the coming day. It came, not suddenly, as it was wont to do in that tropical latitude, but with a slow changing of black to dark gray, and dark gray to a lead color. Sea, air, and sky were all the same dismal tone. We saw it reflected in our own pale faces. We saw it, too, in the appearance of the *Dolphin*. As human beings are said sometimes to do, she had turned gray in the night. Here the color transition stopped. It was daylight.

With the daylight, however, came the realization of our worst fears. Though the wind was dropping fast, the schooner no longer floated buoyantly as on the previous day, but moved in a tired, sluggish way. She wallowed in the dark troughs each time, and it seemed as though she could not climb the ridge that ever rose before her. The waves, finding her defenseless, broke with cruel force against her battered bow; they rolled across her railless deck unceasingly; they pounced upon her unawares, and buried her to the break of the poop. They did not race with ruffled backs and smoking crests before the gale now, but swept on in a deliberate, lumpish fashion, more than ever dangerous.

The *Dolphin* was sinking. Her hold was half full of water, and her deck almost on a level with the sea. Sooner or later — it might

not be for half a day, or it might be within half an hour — she would go down.

Up to this time I had looked forward to the end with hopeful certainty. We should pull through it all right, I felt sure. Now I could see nothing ahead of us but death. No matter which way I turned, the same grim specter rose before me, cruel and inevitable. I did not seem to care very much. It was not so hard to face death as I thought it would be. My principal feeling was one of rebellion. It was unjust that we should die then, just as the storm was over. It was not right to be treated so after all our efforts. Why had not she gone down in the night, when we were asleep, if she was going down? It was an infernal shame! And in my heart of hearts I did not even then believe it.

It began to rain again — a heavy tropical downpour, though strangely cold. By comparison, the salt water that broke over us every few minutes was warm, and we wished it would come oftener. From time to time I crept below and brought up more ale. It kept us from getting hungry, but otherwise had no effect. Returning from one of these trips, I found Blake in an attitude that he had doubtless learned at his mother's knee. His eyes were closed, the palms of his hands were placed together, and his lips were moving. He was praying. Not wishing to intrude upon him, I sat down on the top step of the com-

panion, and waited. It was evident that the *Dolphin's* captain had given up all hope; yet, in the face of this grave acknowledgment (for so I took it), I could not forbear an inward smile. It was so funny to see Blake, of all men, praying. As I sat there, I fell to wondering whether it would be any good for me to pray. After due reflection I decided that it would not be any good. I argued that as I had not prayed for years, God would know that fear was my only reason for taking it up again, and would therefore take no notice of any applications of mine. Thus I reasoned and thought in the hours which I felt were my last.

I took my place beside Blake again, and drearily watched the gray, foam-streaked surges that bore down upon us in such an endless regiment. How long should we have to wait before they swallowed us? I asked myself. I tried to imagine how it would all end, and I resolved that when it came I should not swim. Then my thoughts turned toward home. The picture of a dear old midland vicarage with climbing roses upon its walls, and an ancient cedar of Lebanon on its lawn, came before me, and in and about it moved the forms of those who were nearest to me. Yet, strange to say, I saw them only in one place. Thus my mother ever sat at a table pouring tea from an old silver tea-pot that I remembered from childhood. The ornament

on top of the lid had been lost, and a huge black-velvet cozy with red embroidery stood close to the tea-pot stand. My father, with his coat-tails flying, appeared taking a short cut over the graves to the vestry door. The last bell had tolled, and the processional begun. My sisters also I saw in some odd way. Aye, and there was a girl, too, a fair-haired, blue-eyed sweetheart of mine, sitting in the stern of a boat with a counterpane sail, and steering boldly into forbidden reaches of the river.

We grew unutterably weary as the day advanced. Weak, stupefied, aching in every muscle and shivering with cold, we sat waiting for the end. For my own part, nothing but pride kept me up. I would have given worlds to creep into one of the cabin berths and go to sleep. The schooner, meanwhile, sank lower and lower. It would not be long now. We imagined that the fear of death had left us, and we were calm.

In the midst of this somewhat boastful acquiescence of ours, however, the *Dolphin*, now slow and lubberly in her movements, plunged headlong into the belly of a quivering green sea. Instantly our tranquillity forsook us, and we sprang to the highest point, — the main-boom, — blanched and trembling with fright. The wave closed over us with a seething sound, and, with the weight of molten lead, it flattened us upon the spar as though it would crush our lives out.

When it had passed, we saw that a yawning hole had opened up in the main-hatch. It could now be but a few minutes before she would fill and founder.

In a frenzy of self-preservation, we turned to the small dinghy that lay on the poop. The schooner's largest boat had been knocked to splinters long before, and but for the fact that the dinghy had been placed bottom up directly abaft the mainmast, and had been partly sheltered by the cabin skylight, it would also have been demolished. I do not think that either of us believed such a cockle-shell would live in that sea. We took to her merely as a last resort—a staving off of the termination. Hurriedly we cut the lashings, turned her upon her keel, and saw that she was firmly plugged. Oars we could not find, but we threw a bailer into her, and an old rope fender to act as a sea-anchor. Then we slid her down to the side, intending to launch her over the rail with our hands, for she was very light. All being in readiness, I turned to dive below for some food, and as I did so the *Dolphin* plunged again. I had scarce time to throw myself over the gunwale of the dinghy before it was afloat and whirling on the crest of the advancing wave. I expected that we should be swamped immediately, but as the wave passed without our shipping much water, I gained courage, and, making the fender fast to the end of the painter, threw it

overboard. Looking round, I then saw that Blake lay at the bottom of the boat, behind me, face downward. Overcome by pain, my companion had fainted. I raised his head a little, and placed a stretcher under his forehead. More than this, however, I did not dare.

As the dinghy rose again, I looked anxiously on all sides for some signs of the *Dolphin*, but I could not see her. The sea, gray, and streaked with wavering lines of foam, filled my vision. It was monstrous, awful, terrifying, and I dropped cowering at the bottom of the boat.

Beyond this point my memory fails me. I remember, hazily, starting up once or twice, and madly bailing. I recollect also looking up into a blue sky, and wondering if it were a dream. But, for the rest, I know nothing.

XII

HOME FROM THE SEA

IT was a month after the "great blow," a month since the *Dolphin* had taken her last plunge and joined the ever-increasing fleet which lies anchored for all time at the bottom of the beautiful but treacherous ocean. The wreck of the pearling-fleet had been well-nigh complete. Out of all the boats that had been blown to sea that night, not more than a fourth had come back. Though the *Cockatoo*, driven southward to the rescue by her plucky captain, had arrived in time to pick up more than one hundred castaways, between four and five hundred men went down with their boats. Blake and I, after being in the dinghy some eighteen hours, were sighted by the lookouts of the *Cockatoo*, and taken aboard unconscious.

For a week the steamer had zigzagged, circled, and scoured the adjacent waters, saving lives, towing in helpless boats, and giving aid to others. When she could do no more, she proceeded to Cossack, taking with her

most of the rescued. But I, having a firm belief in the *Norma's* seaworthiness, and hoping that she would yet appear, had taken up my abode on Pomfret's lugger, and remained behind.

Pomfret, who was mate of the *Moscow* at the time I bought my boat, had married Suggitt's half-caste daughter Maiwa. About a month before the blow he had left the old brig to try his luck at diving, at which the pirate became so angry that he refused to let Maiwa go with him; and I had earned the gratitude of the separated couple by assisting Pomfret, one dark night, to recapture his wife.

A score or so of luggers were anchored in the creek that opens into Lagrange Bay, which had been decided upon as the harbor of refuge during the remainder of the cyclone season. Most of the men were engaged in repairing their boats, for none had escaped whole. There were a few of us, however, who spent our days upon the headland of Cape Bossut, watching for boats that did not come. At the end of a month we reluctantly abandoned our lookout, buried our hopes, and began to plan anew.

For myself, not being yet toughened to life's reverses, I must say that the thought of beginning again seemed very hard, and I could not decide upon any definite course. It was not that I was particularly disheartened, nor yet that I was disappointed, but be-

cause, underlying all my other feelings, there was a sense of loneliness, a craving for affection, for sympathy — because, in a word, I was homesick. Though I was eager to try it again, and said with my mouth that I would stay and fight it out to a successful end, yet in my heart I wanted first, and above all things, to go home. But each time that this craving seemed about to master me, Pride would step in and choke it down again. What! go back after three years with practically nothing? Slink home, like a dog with his tail between his legs, and admit that you are beaten? Face that trusting, confident sweetheart of yours in the old country, and tell her that you have failed? Not you; before you do that you 'll rot in Australia. Eh, old man? Well, rather. Thus spoke Pride, whose other name is Fear; and he spoke so loudly as to drown the weaker voice. Nevertheless, under the influence of Pride I was miserable.

In this uncertain and uncomfortable state of mind, I lay, one blazing afternoon, under the sail-cloth awning that we had rigged aboard the *Swift.* Pomfret was over the side, painting; the boys were up the creek with the water-barrels; and the only other person on deck was Maiwa, who sat near the tiller, sewing on a ridiculously small garment, and crooning the while a weird native song. From forward came the prattle of little waves

at play across the bow; from the bank the shrill cries of a flock of gaudy parrots, and the laughter of two native urchins learning how to throw the spear; from down the creek the hollow-sounding blows of a hammer upon a vessel's ribs. The heat was so intense that December day that one could smell it. A scorching breath, straight from a thousand miles of fervid desert, blew down over the great red sand-hill, and bred a haze in which the tops of the tall gum-trees swam. The pitch in the deck-seams boiled, the paint blistered, and the mangroves drooped their dark-green leaves and seemed to stretch their tortuous roots deeper into the water.

I was thinking, trying hard to make up my mind what to do. The next day a party of six were to start overland for McPherson's station, a distance of about sixty miles, where they intended to get horses and return to Cossack. Whether to go with them or not, I could not decide.

My troubled thoughts were interrupted by the grating of a boat alongside. I heard my name spoken, and sprang up in time to receive a letter. It had lain aboard the *Pigeon* in Roebuck Bay for about six weeks, and had been written nine months before. I thanked the fellow who had brought it, offered him a drink of Pomfret's whisky, then hid myself forward and broke the seal.

If this were fiction, that letter would have

brought me news that I had come in for a title, a fortune, or at least a legacy; but since it is merely a narrative of true experiences, it must be said that the letter contained nothing which, in the eyes of the world, could be accounted valuable. Yet, to me, inasmuch as it brought new life, resolution, and an ecstasy of happiness, it was priceless. My wounds of disappointment it healed with words of sunny hope, my sore heart it eased with its ready sympathy, and my foolish pride it conquered with the assurance that I was loved and not forgotten. Not forgotten! that is the thing that the wanderer wants to know most.

MY DEAREST OLD ——: I have been thinking of you, as indeed I do every hour of the day, and wondering when you were coming back to me. It is so long. Every night, when the lamps are lighted, we sit round the fire and talk of you. Sometimes we get the atlas and follow you with a pencil as far as we can, and wonder what you are doing, and wish you were with us again. We miss you so much —

Oh, what balm these words gave to my wounded spirit! To know that, though far away, in that desolate creek, with the hand of the world against me, I was still thought of, wished for, missed, was a joy not to be described.

As I read on, my eyes filled, and there rose in my throat a lump that would not be swallowed.

Do you remember [the letter went on] the signal-code by which you sent me messages from the church tower, and the fun we had singing Christmas carols under Billy Mitchell's window?

I smiled through my joyous tears, then gave way utterly, and, burying my head in my arms, cried like the great homesick boy that I was. All that this letter meant to me, you stay-at-homes can never know; for there are joys which only the rover and the outcast can appreciate.

Often before I had choked back this home-craving, and held it down with the weight of ambition; but in my hour of trouble and broken hopes it gained the mastery. In vain I rebelled and fought against it; I was too weak, too young, and was at last forced to acknowledge myself beaten. And this, partly because I was not old enough to have lost faith, partly because I was not yet commercialized, but chiefly because I was still swayed by that true sentiment which is the heritage of youth. For when we are young we are governed by the heart, and love is best of all.

I read my precious letter many, many times, and when I rose, every barrier that pride had raised was leveled, and I was filled with glorious anticipations. Yes, I was going home. I began at once to look at things with different eyes. My loss, after all, was not so great; for I still had life and youth, and a little money in the bank.

And so, after three years of quaintly mixed ease and hardship, success and failure; after being in turn sailor, tramp, miner, shepherd, fishmonger, barber, roustabout, officer, and diver; after having twice climbed the ladder of success and twice lost my footing; after experiencing fever, hunger, various thumpings, suffocation, and lastly shipwreck, I turned like a homing pigeon and flew back from the antipodes to the old nest.

Next day I started with the party for McPherson's, and from that time I lingered not one unnecessary moment on my journey. But nothing went fast enough for me. Neither the sturdy *Cockatoo* kicking her way through the sweltering seas toward Singapore, nor the swift *Saghalien* driving through the Red Sea and the ditch of Suez, nor the express-trains from Marseilles to Paris and thence to London, could keep pace with my impatience.

Nor was I satisfied until I reached a certain village in the midlands, where lived the author of my last home letter.

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